NATION

MP girl gangraped in moving ambulance

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BUSINESS

Mkt rebounds after deep plunge to settle 1% higher

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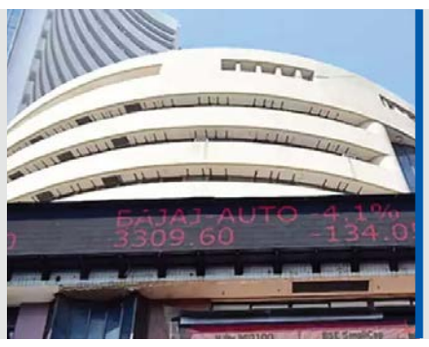

SPORTS

Champions Trophy: PCB sticks to No Hybrid Model

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

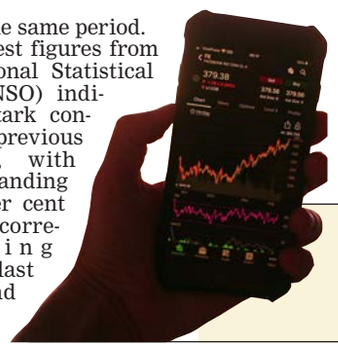
Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 30 NOVEMBER 2024 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 27 JUMADA I, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 304 | Pages: 8

India's economic growth slows to two-year low of 5.4% in Q2

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

India's economic growth has slowed to a near two-year low of 5.4 per cent in the July-September quarter of the current fiscal year, primarily due to underperformance in the manufacturing and mining sectors and weaker consumer spending. Despite this downturn, India remains the fastest-growing major economy globally, as China reported a GDP growth of 4.6 per cent during the same period.

The latest figures from the National Statistical Office (NSO) indicate a stark contrast to previous quarters, with GDP expanding by 8.1 per cent in the corresponding quarter last year and 6.7 per cent in the April-June period of this fiscal year. The previous low of 4.3 per cent was observed in the October-December quarter of the 2022-23 financial year.



Private final consumption expenditure (PFCE), a key indicator of consumer spending, also decelerated, dropping to 6 per cent in the September quarter from 7.4 per cent in the preceding quarter. Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran acknowledged that while the growth rate of 5.4 per cent was disappointingly low, there were positive aspects, such as advancements in agriculture and construction.

The agricultural sector's gross value added (GVA) increased to 3.5 per cent from 1.7 per cent a year earlier, while the construction sector saw a GVA growth of 7.7 per cent, down from 13.6 per cent. However, manufacturing GVA slowed to a mere 2.2 per cent compared to a robust 14.3 per cent last year, and mining GVA registered only 0.01 per cent growth, contrasting with 11.1 per cent a year ago.

Meanwhile, government data also revealed that the fiscal deficit reached 46.5 per cent of the full-year target by the end of October, amounting to Rs 7,50,824 crore. —*PTI*

46.5%
Fiscal deficit of Budget Estimate during the first seven months (April-October) of this fiscal, amounting to ₹7,50,824 crore.

Shivakumar ***PHOTO: PTI***

CM, DKS rule out immediate Cabinet reshuffle

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday dismissed the possibility of an immediate Cabinet expansion, while simultaneously indicating that former tribal welfare minister B Nagendra would be inducted into the Cabinet at a later date. When specifically asked about plans to induct Nagendra into the Cabinet, the chief minister said, "We will induct him, but not immediately." The total strength of the cabinet in the Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka government is 34 ministers. This includes Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar, along with 32 other ministers. Shivakumar also said that the matter had not been discussed with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

State to pay ₹120cr for Rabi crop damage: Minister

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

State Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said on Friday that Rabi crops on 1.58 lakh hectares of were damaged due to rains across the state and assured compensation would be paid to the affected farmers within a week. Speaking at a press meet, after a video conference with all Deputy Commissioners, Gowda stated, "A joint survey has been conducted over the past month to assess the crop damage during the Rabi season, and the data entry work is nearing completion. The estimated loss is around Rs 120 crore, and the compensation will be credited to farmers' bank accounts within the next week." "During the Kharif season, crops were destroyed in about 77,000 hectares of land. In some areas, houses collapsed, and there were incidents of loss of life. Rs 162 crore has already been deposited in the accounts of the affected farmers as compensation," Gowda added. —*PTI*

SC halts trial proceedings in Sambhal mosque dispute

Supreme Court asks UP to maintain peace and harmony

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered a Sambhal trial court to halt proceedings in the case over the Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid and its survey at Chandausi while directing the UP government to maintain peace and harmony in the violence-hit town.

On 19 November, a court of civil judge of Sambhal passed an ex-parte order for a survey of the mosque by an advocate commissioner after taking note of a plea of the Hindu side claiming the mosque was built by Mughal emperor Babur in 1526 after demolishing a temple. On 24 November, violence gripped the area, post the order, snuffing out four lives.

It directed the proposed report of the advocate commissioner following the mosque survey be kept in a sealed cover, till the appellate court including the Allahabad High Court heard the appeal of the mosque committee.

Earlier, Sambhal court Civil Judge Aditya Singh directed the court-appointed commissioner Rakesh Singh Raghav to submit within 10 days the survey report on the mosque. —*PTI*

Devotees leave after offering prayers at the Shahi Jama Masjid amid tight security, in Sambhal, on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

SC to hear Shahi Idgah dispute on 9 Dec

The Supreme Court on Friday said it will hear on 9 December a plea of the mosque committee against the Allahabad High Court rejecting its petition challenging the maintainability of 18 cases of the Hindu side related to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute in Mathura. The cases filed by the Hindu side seek the "removal" of the Aurangzeb-era mosque.

Sour relations can't lead to abetment of suicide: SC

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Supreme Court has clarified that broken relationships, while emotionally painful, do not inherently constitute abetment of suicide unless there is evidence of intent to cause harm. This ruling came on Friday as the Court overturned the conviction of Kamaruddin Dastagir Sanadi, previously found guilty by the Karnataka High Court of offences including cheating and abetment of suicide under the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Sanadi faced accusations after the mother of a 21-year-old woman reported that her daughter took her own life in August 2007, following Sanadi's refusal to honour a promise to marry. The trial court had acquitted Sanadi of all charges, but the High Court later sentenced him to five years in prison and imposed a fine of Rs 25,000. —*PTI.*

MINORITY RIGHTS IN FOCUS

Hefazat-e-Islam supporters protest at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, demanding an immediate ban on ISKCON, in Dhaka on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

B'desh accuses India of 'double standards'

DHAKA, 29 NOV

The Bangladeshi interim government has accused India of "double standards" regarding the treatment of minority communities, following the arrest of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das on charges of sedition. Asif Nazrul, Law Affairs Adviser to the interim government, took to Facebook to express that India's concerns over Bangladesh's minority rights are unwarranted, citing ongoing violence against Muslims in India, which he described as receiving no remorse from Indian authorities.

Nazrul referenced a Voice of America Bangla survey indicating that 64.1 per cent of Bangladeshis believe the interim government offers better protection to minorities than the previous Awami League administration.

In response to criticisms from Indian media, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's Press Secretary, Shafiqul Alam, urged journalists in Bangladesh to counter what he labelled an "industrial scale misinformation campaign" and stressed the importance of controlling the narrative surrounding Bangladesh's internal affairs. Protests erupted at Dhaka University, where students called for resistance against alleged Indian interference in Bangladesh. —*PTI*

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Adani row involves pvt firms and US, says India

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed on Friday that allegations against Adani Group executives are a legal matter involving private entities and the US Department of Justice (DOJ). Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated during a weekly press briefing that India believes established legal procedures will be followed in this case. He added that the Indian government had not been informed in advance regarding the allegations.

"Any request from a foreign government for the service of summons or arrest warrants is part of mutual legal assistance, and such requests are examined based on their merits. We have not received any request on this case from the US side," Jaiswal noted, in response to reports about potential summons against the Adani Group's leadership. The Adani Group has vehemently denied the bribery allegations against its founder and Chairman Gautam Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani, and Vineet Jain, Managing Director and CEO of Adani Green Energy. —*ANI*

>>>More on Pages 3, 7

CM urges PM for clearance of 2 irrigation projects

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, urging immediate rectification of the state's short-term farm loan limits, as well as seeking financial support of Rs 10,000 crore for critical infrastructure projects.

In a meeting held at the Parliament complex, Siddaramaiah addressed several pressing issues in the areas of agriculture, water resources, and urban infrastructure, accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister D K Shiva Kumar, Energy Minister KJ George, and Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh. He expressed concern over the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development's (NABARD) recent decision to reduce Karnataka's Short-Term Agricultural Credit Limit from Rs 5,600 crore to Rs 2,340 crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year. He warned that this 58 per cent decrease would significantly hinder farmers' access to essential loans, forcing many to rely on private lenders.

He also requested Rs 5,300 crore for the long-pending Upper Bhadra Project, aimed at irrigating drought-prone farmlands in central Karnataka. Furthermore, he called for urgent clearances for the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir and Kalasa Bandhuri projects, which are awaiting approval from the Jal Shakti and Environment ministries.

Siddaramaiah sought special assistance for urban transportation initiatives for Bengaluru and requested funds for infrastructure development in 13 emerging city corporations. He also highlighted concerns about the state's diminished tax share from the 15th Finance Commission, advocating for compensation grants to ensure equitable treatment in future financial allocations. —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, in New Delhi on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Cyclone 'Fengal' to make landfall near Puducherry today

CHENNAI, 29 NOV

Cyclonic storm 'Fengal' over Bay of Bengal is likely to make a landfall on Saturday afternoon, close to Puducherry, with wind speed upto 90 kmph, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday. Under its influence, heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places is expected in north Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Earlier in the day, the IMD said the deep depression intensified into cyclonic storm With Fengal (pronounced as Feinjal) all set to cross coast, the Tamil Nadu government declared 30 November a holiday for educational institutions and IT companies were requested to allow employees to work from home. —*PTI*

BANDIPUR TIGER RESERVE

Elephant dies from 'Anthrax'

MYSURU, 29 NOV

A female elephant has died under suspicious circumstances that suggest Anthrax at the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The 30-year-old pachyderm was discovered deceased near Bachahalli in the Kundukere range of Bandipur in the Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Thursday.

Forest department officials found the elephant late on Thursday, with symptoms indicative of Anthrax, including severe bloating and bleeding from various body parts. A postmortem examination was conducted the following day in the presence of senior officials.

Veterinarian Dr Mirza Wasim, who performed the autopsy, reported that the elephant exhibited classic symptoms of Anthrax, such as blood oozing from its ears, mouth, and rectum, along with pronounced body bloating. Samples from the deceased animal have been sent to advanced veterinary laboratories for thorough examination to verify the presence of Anthrax.

REPRESENTATIVE PIC

As a precautionary measure, Dr Wasim recommended vaccinations for cattle in surrounding villages near the forest. S Prabhakaran, the deputy conservator of forests and project director of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, indicated that they are collecting information regarding any other animal deaths linked to Anthrax in the area, which includes consulting with the department of animal and veterinary sciences.

Prabhakaran emphasised that while the initial signs point to Anthrax, conclusive confirmation will only come from laboratory results. The forest department is actively coordinating efforts to monitor cattle and livestock for potential Anthrax infections and will continue to share information regarding any suspected cases in neighbouring communities. —*Salar News*

Mahayuti meeting put off as Shinde heads to hometown

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

A key Mahayuti meeting scheduled on Friday was put off and likely to take place on Sunday now as outgoing Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde headed to his native village, delaying government formation a week after poll results.

The ruling alliance's meeting was expected to be convened in Mumbai on Sunday, said sources in the Shiv Sena, which is headed by Shinde.

Leaders of the BJP, the largest Mahayuti constituent, said they were awaiting arrival of central observers for the legislature party meeting. Shinde returned to Mumbai on Friday morning. He left for his native village Dare in Satara district in western Maharashtra in the evening. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Sidhu, wife sued for ₹850cr over cancer treatment claims

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu and his wife, Navjot Kaur Sidhu, have been served a legal notice amounting to Rs 850 crore by Chhattisgarh Civil Society (CCS) after Sidhu's claims regarding his wife's cancer recovery. Sidhu stated in a press conference on 21 November that his wife had been declared cancer-free in 40 days, thanking to a special diet plan, which included turmeric, neem leaves, and apple cider vinegar, alongside conventional treatment. He emphasised the combination of diet and medical treatments in her recovery.

The CCS deemed these statements misleading, warning that such claims could discourage cancer patients from seeking proper medical treatment. They accused Sidhu of potentially endangering lives by promoting alternative treatments and demanded an apology from the couple. The civil society gave them seven days to provide evidence supporting the claims or face legal action. Sidhu clarified that the diet plan was used in consultation with doctors and meant to facilitate the treatment, not replace it.

He reiterated his respect for medical professionals, emphasising that all steps were taken collaboratively with doctors' guidance. —*Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: X

Ed Sheeran's Mathematics tour in City on 8 Feb

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

British musician Ed Sheeran will perform in Bengaluru on 8 February 2025, at NICE Grounds as part of his Mathematics Tour, organisers announced on Friday. Sheeran, 33, is set to embark on his most expansive tour of the country to date, beginning in Pune on 30 January at Yash Lawns, followed by Hyderabad on 2 February at Ramoji Film City, Chennai on 5 February at YMCA Ground, and Shillong on 12 February at JN Stadium before concluding in Delhi NCR on 15 February. Tickets will be on BookMyShow and Sheeran's official website. *—PTI*

Kolar farmers want Forest Department to return land

KOLAR, 29 NOV

The Kolar district Ryot Sangha (farmers' association) has demanded the return of lands reclaimed by the Forest Department from small and medium farmers, taken without a joint survey. Narayana Gowda, the association's president, criticised the administration for failing to conduct a survey of 64 acres in Jingalakunte, despite clear instructions from the Forest Ministry. The association also called for a survey of lands owned by former Speaker Ramesh Kumar in Srinivaspur taluk before December 5. The survey, initially scheduled for November 6, was postponed due to "technical reasons," which Gowda suspects were influenced by external pressure. He accused the Deputy Conservator of Forests of acting swiftly to reclaim farmers' land but remaining silent on the survey of Ramesh Kumar's alleged encroachments. *—Salar News*

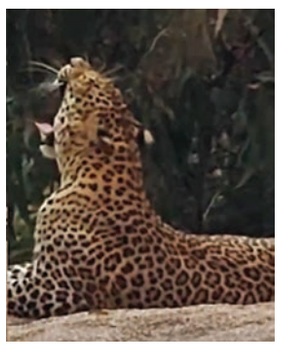


PHOTO: X

Leopard spotted in City, forest officials deployed

BENGALURU 29 NOV

Following reports of leopard sightings near Banashankari 6th stage, the Forest Department expressed uncertainty about the recency of the videos being circulated in the social media. Messages and alerts circulated widely on Resident Welfare Association (RWA) WhatsApp groups, with some residents near Sobha Forest View Apartments claiming to have seen the leopard in the area. A forest official said that they have deployed personnel to investigate the area based on the reports. "There is no confirmation yet regarding a leopard's presence," the official stated. However the official has urged residents to remain vigilant while the matter is being investigated. *—Salar News*

School student killed in road accident in Mysuru

MYSURU, 29 NOV

A 11-year-old boy was killed on the spot, and another student sustained injuries when the autorickshaw they were travelling to school crashed a scooter near Kamagere in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Friday. According to the police, the deceased has been identified as Vimalra, a class five student of St Xavier School hailing from Mangala village of Hanur taluk. The injured was rushed to Holycross hospital in Kamagere. *—Salar News*

BJP's Renukacharya's faction seeks Yatnal's expulsion

Renukacharya plans to organise a mega rally in Davangere

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

A faction of former BJP legislators in the State, led by MP Renukacharya, has urged the party's high command to expel senior MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal for his outspoken criticism of the state leadership, particularly targeting state President BY Vijayendra. Renukacharya and a group of "like-minded" leaders announced plans to organise a mega rally in Davangere soon, which is expected to showcase their political strength.

The faction, including notable figures such as Katta Subramanya Naidu, Hartal Halappa, Roopali Naik, and Basavaraj Dadesugur, is seen as supportive of Vijayendra. They intend to embark on a tour across various parts of the state starting from Kurudumale in Kolar district, visiting temples to instil confidence among party workers amidst the turmoil stirred by Yatnal's criticisms. This initiative aims to rally party support for Vijayendra and his father, veteran leader BS Yediyurappa.

Yatnal, supported by MLAs Ramesh Jarkiholi, BP Harish, and former lawmakers including Aravind Limbavali and Kumar Bangarappa, has been vocal against the state leadership, accusing them of "adjustment politics" with the ruling Congress. Yatnal and Jarkiholi have also opted to hold parallel agitations over the waqf issue, distancing themselves from recent protests by the party.

Renukacharya labelled Yatnal a "Congress agent," and expressed concerns about his public remarks, stating, "His loose talk has upset party leaders and workers. He should cease his unjustified conflicts." He urged Yatnal to clarify his relationship with national leaders while questioning why he could not accept the authority of newly appointed party leadership.

Renukacharya further asserted that Yatnal's actions contributed to the BJP's defeat in the 2023 Assembly elections, stating, "His conduct makes him culpable for our loss."

He called for unity within the party, recognising Yediyurappa's role in fostering and developing party leadership, and emphasised that their actions were not personally motivated but rather for the party's future. *—PTI*

BJP MP Renukacharya (centre) called for unity within the party, recognising Yediyurappa's role in fostering party leadership *PHOTO: INSTAGRAM*

BJP slams CM's role as RDPR Varsity Chancellor

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

The opposition BJP has condemned the Karnataka government's decision to appoint the Chief Minister as the chancellor of the Karnataka State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) University, replacing the governor.

The party argues that this move undermines the integrity of the higher education system.

State BJP president BY Vijayendra branded the decision a "conspiracy" aimed at diluting the powers of the governor, who traditionally serves as the chancellor for all public universities in Karnataka. Currently, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot holds this post.

Vijayendra remarked on social media platform 'X' that this shift, done under the pretext of preventing political interference in education, is a ploy by the Siddaramaiah-led government amid allegations of corruption. *—PTI*

SPECULATIONS CLEARED

CM rules out immediate Cabinet expansion

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday dismissed the possibility of an immediate Cabinet expansion, while simultaneously indicating that former tribal welfare minister B Nagendra would be inducted into the Cabinet at a later date.

"We are not doing it now," Siddaramaiah told reporters, effectively putting to rest speculation about potential changes in the State Cabinet's composition.

When specifically asked about plans to induct Nagendra into the Cabinet, the chief minister said, "We will induct him, but not immediately."

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar echoed similar sentiments earlier in the day, stating that "the situation (for Cabinet expansion) has not come" and that there had been no discussion about filling the lone existing vacancy.

"The situation (for cabinet expansion) has not come. There has been no discussion to fill up that one vacancy," he told reporters, effectively putting to rest speculation about potential changes in the state cabinet's composition.

Shivakumar also revealed that the matter of Cabinet expansion had not been discussed with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

Currently, the Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka government's Cabinet comprises 34 ministers, including the chief minister and deputy chief minister, along with 32 other ministerial colleagues.

The total strength of the cabinet in the Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka government is 34 ministers. This includes Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar, along with 32 other ministers. *—PTI*

FIR against seer for remarks on Muslims

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

An FIR has been registered against Vishwa Vokkaliga Mahasamastana Math seer Kumara Chandrashekarana tha Swamiji for his remarks on voting power to Muslims, police said on Friday.

He made the statement during a protest meeting organised by the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh here on Tuesday against notices issued by Karnataka's Waqf board.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka, terming the case against the seer as an insult to the Vokkaliga community said the BJP will protest on the streets if he is "harassed".

Urging everyone to unite to protect farmers and their land, Swamiji said that a law should be brought in where Muslims community don't have the voting power.

Stating that it should be ensured there is no Waqf board, he said someone taking away someone else's land is not "Dharma".

"...everyone should fight against injustice being caused to farmers...it is said that the Waqf board can claim anyone's land. It is a big injustice...someone taking away someone else's land is not Dharma, the seer had said.

However, on Wednesday, Swamiji expressed regret over his statement, calling it a "slip of tongue". Meanwhile, Ashoka along with former Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan and party leaders met seer. *—PTI*

Kumara Chandrashekarana tha Swamiji *PHOTO: SALAR*

BUBBLING WITH JOY

School children have a gala time while being honoured with the Keladi Chennamma Sourya award during the Children's Day event at Bal Bhavan in Bengaluru on Friday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

HASSAN EVENT IN SUPPORT OF CM, SAYS YATHINDRA

MYSURU, 29 NOV

Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah on Friday said the Swabhimani Janandolana Samavesha, a convention slated to be held at Hassan on 5 December, has the approval of the party High Command, and there is no opposition from party functionaries about organising the event.

Yathindra said the convention in Hassan is not a show of strength of any particular individual, but it is a stage for expressing solidarity of the Ahinda community to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the wake of the Opposition's attack on the government. He said more than two lakh people are expected to attend the convention.

Yathindra also dismissed allegations that some Congress functionaries wrote a letter to party headquarters against organising the convention. *—Salar News*

Slain vlogger's boyfriend held

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

Following three days of intense search, police on Friday arrested the 21-year-old accused in the murder of an Assamese woman Maya Gogoi in Devanahalli. The accused, Aarav Hanoy had fled from the City after allegedly murdering his girlfriend.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Bengaluru East) D Devaraj, said that Hanoy was apprehended by the police outside the State and is expected to be brought to Bengaluru later in the night.

"Maya had shared details about their relationship with her cousin, who stayed with her in HSR Layout. As per the Call Detail Records (CDR), the chats between Maya and the accused suggest they planned to meet to resolve a disagreement," said a senior police official.

. "This was a premeditated act of violence, and we are committed to ensuring justice," said Devaraj. "After two days of investigation, we learnt that the accused travelled from Raichur to Madhya Pradesh, then to Uttar Pradesh. Later, he made his way back to Karnataka, arriving at 4 pm today. We picked him from a place in Devanahalli and we are interrogating him," he added. *—Salar News*

CCTV footage from the service apartment showed Maya Gogoi and Aarav Hanoy (inset) checking in *PHOTO: PTI*

CITY CRIME BEAT

₹9.15L stolen valuables recovered, 4 arrested

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

The police arrested four people accused in two separate incidents of chain snatching incidents and recovered stolen valuables worth Rs 9.15 lakh from them. In the first incident, a patrolling team from Yelahanka nabbed two youths for allegedly snatching a 21g gold chain from a woman near Jakkur on 5 November. Following the complaint, the police collected CCTV visuals of the incident and traced the accused on 18 November near Allalasandra Bridge.

Upon interrogation, the accused confessed to having engaged in similar cases in KR Puram and Vidyaranyapura police station limits.

The police recovered stolen gold chains weighing 60g and two bikes, estimated to be worth Rs 4.15 lakh in total, that the accused had given to their associates and later took the duo into custody

Similarly, Mahadevapura police arrested two men for allegedly snatching a 60g gold chain from a woman walking near her house on 21 November. *—Salar News*

Man held for making fake IDs for immigrants

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

A cyber centre owner was arrested for allegedly facilitating fake documents for Bangladeshi illegal immigrants in the city. Surya Nagar police identified the accused as Arnob Mandal, a native of West Bengal. As per the police, the accused used to create fake documents including Aadhaar cards and PAN cards for the illegal immigrants under fictitious names, and helped them procure mobile SIM cards, bank accounts, employment in Bengaluru. *—Salar News*

TOURIST ATTRACTION

Pilikula Nisargadham to get facelift: Boseraju

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

State Minister NS Boseraju, announced on Friday that Pilikula Nisargadham in Mangaluru, a tourist attraction inaugurated by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in 2018, is set to undergo a major transformation to become a world-class destination.

This vision will be discussed at the upcoming Pilikula Development Authority meeting, said the Minister for Minor Irrigation, Science and Technology.

During a review meeting with officials from the Science and Technology Department, Boseraju emphasised Pilikula's potential to become a premier tourism hub.

In a statement, Boseraju stressed that the ample space available at the Pilikula Wildlife Sanctuary makes it an ideal location for transforming into an international-level attraction.

Officials will discuss a detailed blueprint for its comprehensive development at the next meeting, Boseraju said. He also mentioned that a formal proposal would be submitted in the upcoming state budget.

Authorities were directed to expedite the appointment of a consultant agency to facilitate the project's implementation.

During the same meeting, Boseraju announced that the Karnataka government's Department of Science and Technology will host a two-day Quantum Summit in July 2025.

It aims to showcase the state's advancements in the quantum field and foster global collaborations, he said in a statement.

"Discussions are underway with international partners renowned for their achievements in quantum technology to facilitate knowledge exchange. Minister Boseraju has urged officials to begin preparations immediately to ensure a successful conference," the statement added.

The Minister also called for swift progress on the newly constructed sub-regional science centers in Raichur, Chikkamagaluru, and Yadgir.

According to Boseraju, the Science City project near Bengaluru International Airport has made progress, with land allocated by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB).

Officials have been instructed to expedite the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR). *—PTI*

NS Boseraju *PHOTO: PTI*

Lokayukta calls KC Gen hospital a 'haunted home'

BENGALURU 29 NOV

A team led by Karnataka Lokayukta Justice BS Patil conducted a surprise raid on the government-run KC General Hospital in Malleshwaram on Friday, following complaints about rampant corruption and staff negligence.

Upalokayuktas Justice KN Phaneendra and Justice B Veerappa were also part of the operation.

The team visited wards, met patients, and inquired about the availability of services and facilities.

"Patients have complained that D Group workers and nurses demand bribes. Many doctors are absent from duty. Out of five doctors, only one is present. Notices will be issued to the absent doctors and other staff," said Justice Patil.

Justice Patil noted poor hygiene and infrastructure in the hospital after he found there was no flush and even no water in some of the toilets.

He expressed concern on the unavailability of wheelchairs, old and torn cots and beds, dust accumulation throughout the hospital, and improper cleaning routine *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Modi and Shah begin 3-day visit to Odisha

BHUBANESHWAR, 29 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah visit Odisha for three days from Friday, during which they attended the All India DGP/IGP Conference. Ahead of his tour, the Prime Minister in a series of X posts said, "Senior police officers from all over India will take part in this (DGP/IGP) conference. There will be extensive deliberations on enhancing India's internal security apparatus. Different aspects relating to policing and improving public safety will be discussed". The PM will attend the DGP conference on Saturday and Sunday. According to an official statement, the conference will include deliberations on critical components of national security including Counter Terrorism, Left Wing Extremism, Coastal Security and New Criminal Laws. *—PTI*

Nonagenarian activist protests against EVM

PUNE, 29 NOV

Social activist Dr Baba Adhav has started an agitation in Pune against Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), calling their use in elections a "fraud". The activist, who is in his 90s, started his 3-day protest at Phule Wada, the residence of iconic social reformer Jyotiba Phule, in the city on Thursday. Speaking to reporters, he said, "The use of money and EVM is the ultimate cause of the assembly elections results this time. The voting percentage figures were changing continuously. The use of EVMs in elections is a fraud." After their crushing defeat, many MVA leaders have cast aspersions on the credibility of EVMs. *—PTI*

Assam: 5 newly elected members take oath

GUWAHATI, 29 NOV

Five newly elected MLAs who won the recently concluded by-elections in Assam, took oath as legislators of Assam Legislative Assembly on Friday. The oath taking ceremony for five newly elected MLAs - three from BJP and one each from National Democratic Alliance partners Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), was held at Assam Legislative Assembly in presence of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Notably, Samaguri assembly seat is a historic win for the party in the state, as this is the first time the seat will be having a BJP representative. The saffron party candidates Diganta Ghatowal and Nihar Ranjan Das won Behali and Dholai seat respectively. Congress drew a blank in the by-elections despite contesting in all five seats. *—ANI*

PHOTO: X

Birsa Munda's great-grandson dies in Ranchi

RANCHI, 29 NOV

Tribal icon Birsa Munda's great-grandson Mangal Munda, who was undergoing treatment at a hospital here after being injured in a road accident, died of "cardiovascular failure" on Friday, an official of the health facility said. He was 45. Birsa Munda's descendant sustained severe head injuries after he fell from the roof of a passenger vehicle in Jharkhand's Khunti district on 25 November. Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed Munda's demise as a loss to Jharkhand tribal society. Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Governor Santosh Gangwar also condoled the death of Mangal Munda. Meanwhile, the last rites of Mangal Munda are likely to be performed at his ancestral village Ulihatu, around 65 km from Jharkhand's capital Ranchi. *—PTI*

Upset over M'rashtra poll loss, Cong writes to EC

Cong says integrity of poll was compromised; to launch movement

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Congress has raised concerns over alleged irregularities in the Maharashtra assembly election results and has written to the Election Commission (EC) demanding an inquiry. The party claims discrepancies in vote counting, particularly in constituencies it narrowly lost, and accuses the EC of inadequate oversight.

It has called for greater transparency and scrutiny of the election process to ensure fairness.

Congress alleged the integrity of the entire electoral process was being severely compromised and said the party would soon launch a movement against it.

This comes amid significant losses for the Congress in the state elections, further fueling tensions within the party over electoral strategies and outcomes.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other party leaders, during Congress Working Committee meeting, at AICC headquarters in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

In a 12-page document submitted this afternoon, the Congress also referred to doubts about voter data that were raised by former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi and raised two points of concern.

The CWC, which met amid the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament, said the session has been a washout so far because of the Narendra Modi government's "stubborn refusal" to have an immediate discussion on three pressing national issues -- "the recent revelations regarding corruption by a business group, and the violence in Manipur and Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal".

Addressing a joint press conference along with Ramesh and Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera, party general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal said the party discussed the political situation in the country for four-and-half hours and adopted the resolution. *—PTI*

WB, Delhi & Bihar Assemblies witness ruckus

KOLKATA/ DELHI/ PATNA, 29 NOV

BJP legislators staged a walkout from the West Bengal Assembly on Friday after the Speaker refused to allow them to table an adjournment motion against alleged attacks on religious places during the recent pujas.

As the BJP MLAs, led by Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, wanted to table the motion, Speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay turned down the plea.

Infuriated over this decision, around 40 BJP MLAs held up placards with slogans written on them in Bengali.

Delhi

The ruling AAP and Opposition BJP MLAs indulged in blame game over the issue of removal of the bus marshals on the first day of the last session of the five-year tenure of the Delhi Assembly on Friday, with Chief Minister Atishi saying the proposal to reinstate them was pending with the LG.

Participating in a discussion over the the issue, Atishi said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will not field any candidate against Leader of Opposition Vijender Gupta.

PHOTO: PTI

Bihar

Bihar assembly was on Friday adjourned till 2 PM, within minutes of the commencement of proceedings, after opposition members trooped into the well demanding withdrawal of pre-paid electricity meters. *—PTI*

SUSPENSE OR DILEMMA?

PHOTO: X

Shirsat: DyCM post to Shiv Sena if Shinde declines

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 29 NOV

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Shirsat on Friday said if their party head Eknath Shinde doesn't accept the deputy chief minister's post, then it will be given to someone from their outfit.

Talking to reporters, Shirsat said Shinde will certainly not go to the Centre as a Union minister.

After the Mahayuti alliance's astounding performance in the Maharashtra polls, where it won 230 of the 288 seats, Shinde, now the caretaker chief minister, has said that he will "fully support" BJP leadership's decision to name the next CM and won't be a hurdle in the process.

This had led to debates over the possibility of Shinde being offered the deputy CM position and whether he would accept it.

"If Shinde does not accept the deputy CM's post, then some other leader from our party will get it. He (Shinde) will take a call on this by evening," said Shirsat, who retained his Aurangabad assembly West seat.

On Thursday, the Shiv Sena leader said Shinde was unlikely to accept the post of deputy CM in the new government in Maharashtra.

"We will take a decision (on Maharashtra CM) in a day or two. We have held discussions, and the discussions will continue. You will get to know when we take a final decision," Shinde told reporters in Delhi after the meeting.

Many leaders in the Shiv Sena are asking Shinde to accept deputy CM's post if offered by the BJP. However, another section feels it wouldn't be right for him to accept No. 2 position after serving as CM for more than two-and-a-half years, the sources said. *—PTI*

Day 4: LS & RS adjourned amid protests

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The fourth day of the Parliament's winter session saw a flurry of activity with key discussions across both Houses.

The Opposition continued to demand a thorough probe into the Adani issue, leading to intense debates in the Lok Sabha.

Meanwhile, the Rajya Sabha discussed security concerns related to Bangladesh, with the government highlighting India's diplomatic stance.

The session also witnessed calls for greater transparency in various sectors, as political tensions simmered over the handling of key national issues.

The government and Opposition traded barbs, making it a day marked by sharp exchanges and significant legislative moves.

Opposition MPs started the protest soon after the chairman announced that he had accepted their 17 notices for suspension of scheduled business and take up issues related to corruption allegations against the Adani Group, violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal, and Manipur.

With Parliament facing repeated adjournments, the Congress also said the big mystery is why the government is not resisting the interruptions and instead facilitating the aggression of the INDIA parties especially on the Adani issue.

—Agencies/ PTI

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Congress MPs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Pramod Tiwari and KC Venugopal, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah during the Winter session of Parliament, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Priyanka interacts with Oppn MPs in LS amid protests

A day after taking oath, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday came to the Lok Sabha and joined the opposition protest, standing in solidarity near her seat. ayanad MP entered the House when several Opposition, were protesting against Sambhal violence, other issues.

AAP MPs Sanjay Singh, Raghav Chadha, Sandeep Pathak, Ashok Mittal and others protest during Winter session **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong: US SEC indicts Adani, SECI favours it

Congress on Friday accused the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) of favouring the Adani Group while US SEC indicts it, alleging that Adani Green is not suffering one bit even though it is yet to supply a single unit of the contracted 3 gigawatts of electricity to Andhra Pradesh.

'Adjournment notices a tool of disruption'

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday said adjournment notices under Rule 267 of the House are being "weaponised" as a mechanism of disruption before adjourning the proceedings till Monday amid Opposition parties protest over corruption allegations against the Adani Group, and other issues. Opposition MPs started the protest soon after the chairman announced that he had accepted their 17 notices for suspension of scheduled business.

Govt: SC, HCs dismissed 40 EVM petitions

Nearly 42 petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court and various High Courts questioning the electronic voting machines (EVMs), with the higher judiciary repeatedly holding that the machines are credible, reliable and tamper-proof, the government said in Lok Sabha on Friday. Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said according to the Election Commission (EC), EVM is a standalone machine with no radio frequency communication capability.

SCHOOLS REOPEN IN IMPHAL VALLEY, JIRIBAM

IMPHAL, 29 NOV

Schools and colleges in Manipur's Imphal Valley and Jiribam district resumed classes on Friday after a hiatus of 13 days, officials said.

Students in their school uniforms and parents were seen waiting for buses in the state's capital Imphal with the law and order situation improving in the valley districts.

The Directorate of Education Schools and the Higher and Technical Education Department on Thursday ordered the resumption of classes in Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Kakching, Thoubal and Jiribam districts.

K Biken Singh, a central government official whose two children study in a private school in Imphal, said, " Final exams of my children, who are in Class 6 and Class 7, were scheduled to start from the second week of December and parts of the syllabus are yet to be completed. Reopening of schools will allow the teachers to interact with their students."

Meanwhile, the state government ordered relaxation of curfew from 5 am to 4 pm on Friday in all five valley districts and Jiribam to enable people to purchase essential items and medicines, according to an official order. *—PTI*

IN WARSHIPS

India and UK sign pact on electric propulsion systems

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

India and the UK have sealed a framework agreement to co-design and co-produce electric propulsion systems to be used in futuristic warships in sync with their aim to broadbase cooperation in the strategic domain.

A Statement of Intent (SoI) was inked for the proposed plan by the defence ministries of the two countries in Portsmouth on Thursday, an Indian readout of the development said.

The SoI would serve as a broader framework intended for cooperation in the co-design, co-creation and co-production of electric propulsion capability for future naval ships, it said.

"The landing platform docks, planned to be built at an Indian shipyard, are envisaged to have a full electric propulsion system," the readout issued by the defence ministry on Friday said.

"The signing was part of the third joint working group meeting of electric propulsion capability partnership, symbolising the commitment to promote indigenous development of niche technologies," it said. *—PTI*

The agreement was signed by Rajeev Prakash, Joint Secretary of Naval Systems, and Rear Admiral Steve McCarthy **PHOTO: DEFENCE MINISTRY**

India back in UN peace panel

NEW YORK, 29 NOV

India has been re-elected to the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for 2025–26, the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations said in a post on X on Thursday. India's current term on the Commission was expiring on December 31.

"India has been re-elected to the UN Peacebuilding Commission for 2025–2026. As a founding member and major contributor to @UNPeacekeeping, India is committed to continuing its engagement with the PBC to work towards global peace and stability," the post said.

Peacebuilding Commission is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries.

The PBC is composed of 31 Member States, elected from the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council. The top financial contributing countries and the top troop-contributing countries to the United Nations system are also members. *—PTI*

Rs 20 crore was earmarked for 2024-25 to strengthen the Maharashtra Waqf Board **PHOTO: PTI**

Govt cancels 10 cr grant to M'rashtra Waqf Board

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

A day after issuing a government resolution (GR) for the release of Rs 10 crore funds to strengthen the state Waqf Board, the Maharashtra government on Friday withdrew the order amid opposition by BJP.

State Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik confirmed that the order has been withdrawn.

BJP, which won the recent state assembly elections as part of the Mahayuti alliance, opposed the GR saying the decision was taken at the administrative level, and added that Waqf Board has no place in the Constitution.

On Thursday, the government issued the GR, stating that the finance and planning department has approved a Rs 10 crore grant for strengthening the Maharashtra State Board of Waqfs (MSBW) headquartered in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

According to the GR issued on Thursday, Rs 20 crore were earmarked for 2024-25 for strengthening of the state Waqf Board. Of that, Rs 2 crore were already disbursed. *—PTI*

30 suffer burns during torch-lit procession in MP

KHANDWA, 29 NOV

Thirty people, including women and children, were injured during an annual torch-lit procession in Khandwa of Madhya Pradesh, an official said on Friday. The incident occurred around Thursday midnight when the annual procession – in honour of three persons killed by members of the banned Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) on 28 November, 2009 – was culminating at the Clock Tower in Khandwa city, said District Superintendent of Police Manoj Kumar Rai. The participants in the procession dipped the burning torches in a water-filled container to douse them, when a ball of flame suddenly enveloped the spot for around five seconds, Rai said. —*PTI*

HC grants pregnant woman bail, cites jail risks for baby

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court has granted six months temporary bail to a pregnant woman, arrested in a drugs case, noting that delivering a child in prison atmosphere would impact both the mother and the baby. A single bench of Justice Urmila Joshi-Phalke in the order passed on 27 November said even a prisoner is entitled to dignity, and delivering a child in prison may have consequences. The court ordered Soni to be released on a temporary bail for six months. The woman, Surbhi Soni, was arrested in April 2024 under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. At the time of her arrest, she was two months pregnant. She moved the high court seeking bail on humanitarian grounds so that she can deliver her baby outside prison. —*PTI*

'Corbett National Park tech misused to harass women'

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Cameras and drones originally planted in Corbett National Park for conservation activities, such as monitoring animals, are being deliberately misused by local government officials and men to surveil women without consent, a study has found. The study, published in the journal Environment and Planning, revealed that forest rangers intentionally flew drones over local women to scare them and prevent them from collecting natural resources, despite their legal entitlement to do so. A total of 270 residents around the Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand, including women, were interviewed over 14 months by researchers from the University of Cambridge, UK. Researcher and lead author Trishant Simlai reported that the women, told him they felt watched and inhibited by camera traps. —*PTI*

UK museum to return stolen bronze idol to TN

CHENNAI, 29 NOV

The Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University, London, which purchased the Thirumangai Alwar bronze idol in 1967, has agreed to return the idol to Tamil Nadu after the state Idol Wing CID submitted evidence of the idol's trafficking from an ancient temple in Thanjavur district, the police said on Friday. In its recent communication to the Tamil Nadu Idol Wing CID police, the Oxford University has expressed its "commitment to repatriate" the idol said to be worth crores of rupees back to India, due to the wing's efforts, a release here said. "They have also promised to cover all costs associated with transferring the idol from London to India, ensuring that it can be returned to the temple for worship. This marks a significant step in the efforts to return stolen idols to their rightful places of origin," the release said —*PTI*

MP girl gangraped in moving ambulance

Sister, brother-in-law accused of abetting crime

MAUGANJ, 29 NOV

PHOTO: X

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped in a moving ambulance operated under '108' emergency service in Mauganj district of Madhya Pradesh a week ago. Two of the four accused in the case, including the driver, have been arrested, they said.

The crime took place when girl was travelling in the ambulance along with her sister and brother-in-law on 22 November. None of them was a patient. Besides the trio, driver Virendra Chaturvedi and his associate Rajesh Kewat were inside the vehicle, said Deputy Inspector General (Rewa Range) Saket Pandey on Thursday.

Pandey said the ambulance driver was known to the minor, her sister and brother-in-law. En route, the girl's sister and her brother-in-law got down from the vehicle on the pretext of fetching water. Instead of waiting for the couple, the ambulance driver sped away, said the officer.

Later, Kewat raped the girl in the moving vehicle while it was passing through Sunsan village, the officer said. After keeping her hostage for the whole night, the duo dumped her on the roadside in the morning, the DIG said.On reaching home, the survivor narrated the ordeal to her mother, but did file a complaint for two days, fearing the incident would tarnish the family's image, Pandey said.

However, the victim's family filed a case on 25 November against four people, Pandey said. He said the ambulance driver Chaturvedi and Kewat, the alleged rapist, were arrested on Wednesday. A hunt has been launched for the girl's sister and brother-in-law, who have been charged with abetting the crime, said the IPS officer.

All the accused have been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. —*PTI*

Delhi school receives bomb threat after low-intensity blast

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Delhi Police has registered an FIR in connection with the explosion near a cinema hall in the Prashant Vihar area PHOTO: PTI

A private school in Delhi's Rohini received a bomb threat via email on Friday, a day after a low-intensity blast in the Prashant Vihar area injured one person, Delhi Fire Service (DFS) officials said. The threat was later declared a hoax after a thorough search in the school premises.

A DFS team rushed to the school after they received a call from the Delhi Police about a bomb threat email at 10.57am. The police, bomb disposal squad and dog squad, along with DFS personnel, searched the entire premises of the school, a DFS officer said.

No suspicious object was found on the premises, and the threat was declared a hoax, the officer added.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police has registered an FIR in connection with the explosion near a cinema hall in the Prashant Vihar area on Thursday, officials said.

A case under sections 326(g) (mischief with severe consequences to public safety) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, section 4 of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act and section 3 of the Explosive Substance Act was registered at the Prashant Vihar police station, an officer said.

The case was registered and efforts are underway to arrest the accused, the officer said.

Over a dozen teams of the Special Cell, the Crime Branch, and the local police have scanned the footage from the CCTV cameras of the area but nothing suspicious has been found yet, he said. —*PTI*

FATAL ACCIDENT

At least 11 passengers were killed and 25 others injured after a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus overturned in Gondia district of the state on Friday. With a fleet of around 15,000 buses, MSRTC is one of the biggest public transport corporations in the country. Daily, around 60 lakh passengers travel on the corporation buses PHOTO: PTI

IN KERALA

Luxury car owners avail welfare pension

T'PURAM, 29 NOV

Owners of BMW cars and residents of air-conditioned homes have been found listed as recipients of social security pensions meant for the poor in Kerala, according to an audit by the state's Finance Department targeting beneficiaries in a municipality.

This shocking revelation from Kottakkal Municipality in Malappuram district has prompted State Finance Minister KN Balagopal to instruct officials to expand the scope of such audits across the state and ensure the removal of all ineligible persons from the beneficiary lists, sources said on Friday.

"The finance minister's directive calls for vigilance investigations against officials who conducted eligibility verifications, revenue officials who issued income certificates and those who approved pensions. The finance department has also instructed administrative departments to promptly report follow-up actions," a source said.

- The finance department has also instructed administrative departments to promptly report follow-up actions," according to sources

The vigilance and anti-corruption bureau investigation follows an earlier probe by the Malappuram Finance Audit Department into pension beneficiaries in the 7th ward of Kottakkal Municipality.

According to officials, the audit revealed shocking cases of ineligible persons, including owners of BMW cars being listed as pension recipients.

"Some welfare pensioners reportedly live in houses equipped with luxuries such as air conditioners. There were also instances where spouses of government service pensioners were drawing welfare pensions," an official said.

The findings come amidst widespread public outrage in Kerala following reports that nearly 1,500 government employees, including gazetted officers and college professors, had fraudulently claimed social security pensions. —*PTI*

15 LOCATIONS SEARCHED

ED raids Raj Kundra in porn-linked laundering

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

Shilpa Shetty with her husband Raj Kundra PHOTO: PTI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday searched the premises of businessman Raj Kundra, the husband of actor Shilpa Shetty, and some others as part of a money laundering case linked to alleged distribution of pornographic and adult movies, sources said.

Around 15 locations in Mumbai and some cities in UP were searched, the sources said, adding that sleuths reportedly questioned Kundra at one of these premises.

The money laundering case of May 2022 stems from at least two Mumbai police FIRs and chargesheets filed against Kundra and others. The businessman and some others were arrested in the case by the police and later granted bail.

This is the second money laundering case against Kundra. Early this year, the ED had attached assets worth Rs 98 crore of Kundra and Shetty in a crypto currency case. The couple, however, obtained relief from the Bombay High Court against the attachment order.

The businessman told a local Mumbai court in 2021 that there was not even an iota of evidence with the prosecution (Mumbai Police) that would connect the app Hotshots, used in the alleged porn films racket, with an offence under law.

According to the probe agency, the Hotshots app was being used by accused persons for uploading and streaming obscene content.

Kundra said he was falsely implicated and was not even named in the FIR and was dragged by the respondent in case for reasons known to investigators. —*PTI*

ED seizes cash, luxury cars in Kwality Ltd case

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said the investigation agency has seized Rs 1.3 crore in cash and "evidence" related to shell companies after it conducted searches at the former promoters of dairy major Kwality Ltd. as part of an alleged Rs 1,400 crore bank fraud-linked money laundering case. Luxury cars and demat accounts valued at about Rs 6.5 crore have also been frozen under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

ED nabs dad–son duo in ₹2,800-cr chit fund scam

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said it has arrested a father–son duo in Kolkata in an alleged Rs 2,800-crore chit fund scam-linked money laundering case.

A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court sent Basudeb Bagchi and his son Avik Bagchi, promoters of Prayag Group of companies, to 10 days of ED custody, the agency said, adding that premises of the duo, and some others in Kolkata and Mumbai were raided on 26 November.

The duo is accused of defrauding the public by collecting deposits worth Rs 2,800 crore under "false" high-return schemes like monthly income schemes (MIS), redeemable preference shares and club membership certificates. As of now, the ED said, Rs 1,900 crore remains "unpaid" to investors.

The Prayag Group operated without authorisations from regulatory bodies like the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

The agency said funds collected from the investors were "layered" by the promoters by incorporating multiple entities and subsequently used for buying properties. "The ED will interrogate the accused to uncover the properties acquired using the defrauded funds. This action is part of the ED's efforts to trace assets linked to the scam," it said. —*PTI*

Father: Violinist Balabhaskar killed by gold mafia

T'PURAM, 29 NOV

A day after the driver of late violinist Balabhaskar Chandran was reportedly arrested in a gold robbery case, the artist's father on Friday alleged that his son was killed by the gold smuggling mafia.

Balabhaskar's father KC Unni said the development cements their stand that the violinist was killed and driver Arjun was involved in it. "He (Arjun) had criminal antecedents. We came to know about it only after the accident," he said.

Unni also said that the driver had filed a case in a Motor Accident Claims Tribunal in Thrissur seeking compensation of Rs 1 crore, claiming that Balabhaskar was driving the car at the time of the accident. "We have engaged a lawyer to fight that case," he said.

More than six years ago, on 25 September, 2018, while returning to Thiruvananthapuram from Thrissur, Balabhaskar's car had rammed into a tree causing serious injuries to him and killing his baby daughter. Balabhaskar later succumbed to the injuries.

The case was handed over to the CBI on the family's plea after the police ruled it was a road accident. —*PTI*

Panneerselvam gets SC relief in DA case

PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

In a relief to former Tamil Nadu chief minister O Panneerselvam, the Supreme Court on Friday stayed an order of the Madras High Court restoring a disproportionate assets (DA) case against him and his family members.

A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti issued notice to the Tamil Nadu police and others on a plea filed by Panneerselvam. In the meantime, the operation of the judgment was stayed by the top court.

The High Court, on 29 October, set aside a trial court order allowing the prosecution to withdraw the DA case against Panneerselvam and others while discharging the accused.

The high court set aside the order of the chief judicial magistrate/special judge, Sivaganga, passed on 3 December, 2012. —*PTI*

TMC man gets bail in school scam

Supreme Court on Friday granted regular bail to former Trinamool Congress youth leader Kuntal Ghosh in a CBI case linked to the West Bengal primary school recruitment scam.
A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan said it is not likely that the trial will be completed in the foreseeable near future in the case where Ghosh has been in custody for the past 19 months.

Prasad quality: SC rejects plea

Supreme Court on Friday refused to examine a plea seeking regulations over the quality of "prasad" or food offerings being distributed at temples, observing its prayers were within the state's domain.

M'rashtra village pledges to curb swearing, impose fine

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

A Maharashtra village has vowed to keep off its limits cuss words that crop up in almost all situations – from arguments to expressions of endearment.

Saundala village in Nevasa tehsil of Ahilyanagar district, whose economy is dependent on sugarcanes, has decided levy a fine of Rs 500 for those letting out the unsavoury words.

The village committee on Thursday passed a resolution against vulgar language to honour the dignity and self-respect of women, said headman Sharad Argade.

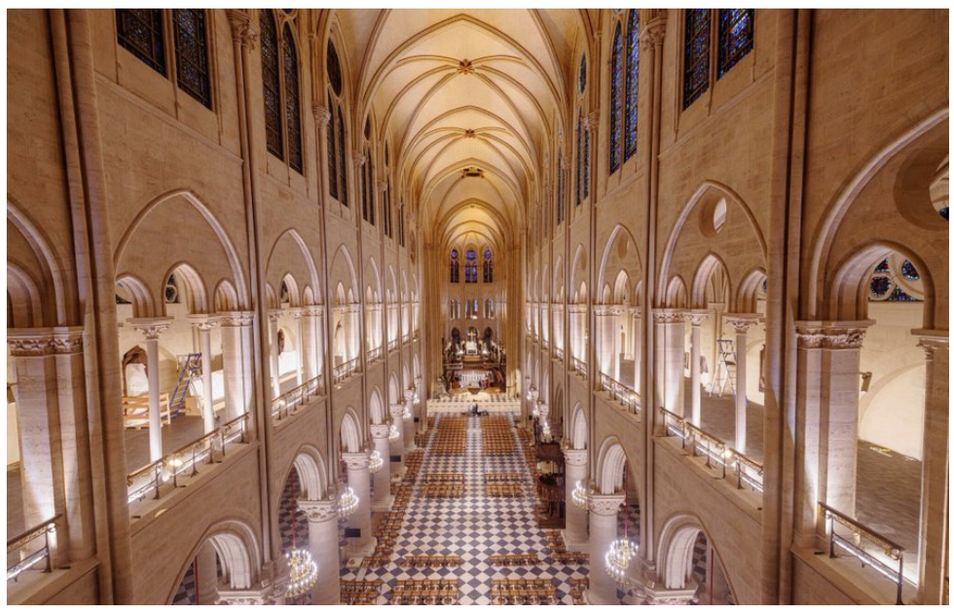
Argade, who moved the resolution, said the use of swear words targeted at mothers and sisters is common during arguments in the village, about 300 km from Mumbai.

"Those who use such a language forget that what they say also applies to the female members of their own families. We have decided to ban profanities and will impose a penalty of Rs 500 on those using bad words," he said, adding that the decision was to honour the dignity and self-respect of women in society. —*PTI*

NOTRE DAME SET TO REOPEN

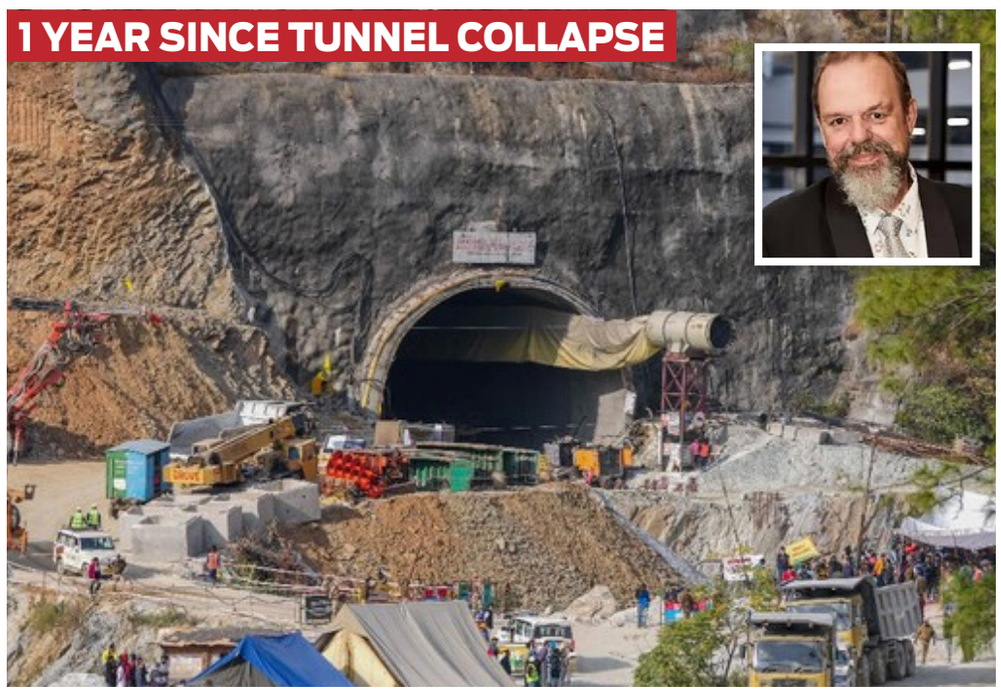
After more than five years of reconstruction, Notre Dame Cathedral in France showed its new self to the world on Friday, with rebuilt soaring ceilings and creamy good-as-new stonework, erasing sombre memories of its devastating fire in 2019. The cathedral will be open to public on 7 December. The cathedral attracted millions of worshippers and visitors annually before the blaze

PHOTO: X



Silkyara ops changed me, says tunneller Arnold Dix

1 YEAR SINCE TUNNEL COLLAPSE



On 12 November 2023, a section of the Silkyara Bend–Barkot tunnel in the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand, caved in while under construction, trapping 41 workers; Arnold Dix (inset) ***PHOTOS: PTI/X***

"It's going to be ok". Someone had to say it, recalls tunneller Arnold Dix. And he did. The message of hope was desperately needed that day last November when he reached Silkyara in Uttarakhand where 41 workers had already been trapped in a tunnel for a week.

There was little light at the end of the tunnel – metaphorically and literally. But his bold promise that the men inside the under-construction Silkyara Bend-Barkot tunnel would be safely rescued by Christmas instilled hope in the workers, their families, and virtually every Indian during those difficult days.

The mountains had literally collapsed on them on 12 November and they were rescued on 28 November, after almost 17 gruelling days. As the entire nation watched with bated breath, Dix became the face of the rescue mission.

"At Silkyara someone had to say, 'it's going to be ok'. Someone had to make everyone believe that we can do this because otherwise it will end how it always ends. They would have been dead," the president of the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association told PTI.

"Normally, I am involved in recovering the bodies and learning the lessons of what has gone wrong. Silkyara was different, somehow I could feel it was different and we could do it," Dix said.

One year after the miraculous feat, the Australia-based hero of the rescue operation, in India to mark the first anniversary of the mission, confessed that his assurance was more based on belief than his technical expertise.

The 60-year-old Australian was in Europe when he received a call from Indian officials informing him about how a portion of the under-construction 4.5km Silkyara Bend-Barkot tunnel in Uttarakhand had collapsed, trapping 41 workers.

Without delay, Dix, widely considered the world's leading expert on underground tunnelling, set off on a journey covering more than 6,400 km, travelling from Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital, to Mumbai, Delhi and then to Dehradun where a helicopter was waiting to take him to the site high up in the Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district.

By the time he arrived on 19 November, the trapped workers had already endured a week of deprivation and fear, aware that the mountain could give way anytime.

The original strategy for the multi-agency-led rescue mission was to use horizontal drilling, assisted by Dix, to evacuate the workers.

However, as the operation neared its conclusion, the previously prohibited manual "rat-hole" mining method was used after augers (a device that drills holes into the ground) struggled to penetrate nearly 60 metres of rock threatening to trap the workers.

"Around day 14 or 15, as we all know, everything had broken. The auger was broken, it ripped itself out of the ground, the casing was ripped apart and the auger itself was in pieces. Things were looking pretty grim. But I still felt that we would be okay, as long as we can stay calm.

Eventually, the workers, under Dix's watchful eye, were extracted through a passage created by welded pipes that rescuers had previously pushed through the rock.

When they emerged, safe and uninjured, Dix was on cloud nine — or on the top of Himalayas — for delivering on his promise that the workers would be home before Christmas. He said his first point of call after he landed at ground zero was to the makeshift temple built by locals near the tunnel where he paid his respects to the deity.

As expected, he became an overnight celebrity after the rescue, with children in India dressing up as the friendly bearded Aussie for costume competitions. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese praised him for his outstanding work during the rescue operation.

"No one ever talks about the engineering people. So when I was told the PM has been saying nice things about me, I was worried that maybe I have had a mental breakdown or a rock has fallen on me. I think it was lovely that those congratulations came and that just highlights that we made the seemingly impossible possible," he said. Simon & Schuster will publish Dix's memoir, aptly titled "The Promise", next year.

It will explore Dix's inspiring journey as a man of many talents -- geologist, lawyer and professor of engineering -- finally culminating in the defining moment of his life when he found himself in the mountains, assuring the world that "everything is going to be fine."

And delivering on that promise. *—PTI*

SALAR

Soldiers desert Ukraine army as war intensifies

Desertion is starving the Ukrainian army of desperately needed manpower and crippling its battle plans at a crucial time in its war with Russia, which could put Kyiv at a clear disadvantage in future ceasefire talks.

Facing every imaginable shortage, tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops, tired and bereft, have walked away from combat and front-line positions to slide into anonymity, according to soldiers, lawyers and Ukrainian officials. Entire units have abandoned their posts, leaving defensive lines vulnerable and accelerating territorial losses, according to military commanders and soldiers.

Some take medical leave and never return, haunted by the traumas of war and demoralized by bleak prospects for victory. Others clash with commanders and refuse to carry out orders, sometimes in the middle of firefights. "This problem is critical," said Oleksandr Kovalenko, a Kyiv-based military analyst. "This is the third year of war, and this problem will only grow." Although Moscow has also been dealing with desertions, Ukrainians going Absent without official leave (AWOL) have laid bare deeply rooted problems bedeviling their military and how Kyiv is managing the war, from the flawed mobilization drive to the overstretching and hollowing out of front-line units. It comes as the U.S. urges Ukraine to draft more troops, and allow for the conscription of those as young as 18.

"It is clear that now, frankly speaking, we have already squeezed the maximum out of our people," said an officer with the 72nd Brigade, who noted that desertion was one of the main reasons Ukraine lost the town of Vuhledar in October. More than 100,000 soldiers have been charged under Ukraine's desertion laws since Russia invaded in February 2022, according to the country's General Prosecutor's Office.

Nearly half have gone AWOL in the last year alone, after Kyiv launched an aggressive and controversial mobilization drive that government officials and military commanders concede has largely failed.

It's a staggeringly high number by any measure, as there were an estimated 3,00,000 Ukrainian soldiers engaged in combat before the mobilisation drive began. And the actual number of deserters may be much higher. One lawmaker with knowledge of military matters estimated it could be as high as 200,000.

Many deserters don't return after being granted medical leave. Bone-tired by the constancy of war, they are psychologically and emotionally scarred. They feel guilt about being unable to summon the will to fight, anger over how the war effort is being led, and frustration that it seems unwinnable. Another deserter said he initially left his infantry unit with permission because he needed surgery. By the time his leave was up, he couldn't bring himself to return.

He still has nightmares about the comrades he saw get killed.

"The best way to explain it is imagining you are sitting under incoming fire and from their (Russian) side, it's 50 shells coming toward you, while from our side, it's just one. Then you see how your friends are getting torn to pieces, and you realize that any second, it can happen to you," he said.

Desertion has turned battle plans into sand that slips through military commanders' fingertips. Ukraine's military recorded a deficit of 4,000 troops on the front in September owing largely to deaths, injuries and desertions, according to a lawmaker. Most deserters were among recent recruits.

The head of one brigade's legal service who is in charge of processing desertion cases and forwarding them to law enforcement said he's had many of them.

That is how Vuhledar, a hilltop town that Ukraine defended for two years, was lost in a matter of weeks in October, said the 72nd Brigade officer, who was among the very last to withdraw. Reinforcements were sent once Russia wised up to Ukraine's weakened position and attacked. But then the reinforcements also left, the officer said. Because of this, when one of the 72nd Brigade battalions withdrew, its members were gunned down because they didn't know no one was covering them, he said.

Still, the officer harbors no ill will toward deserters.

Ukraine's General Staff said soldiers are given psychological support, but it didn't respond to emailed questions about the toll desertions are having on the battlefield.

Once soldiers are charged, defending them is tricky, said two lawyers who take such cases. They focus on their clients' psychological state when they left.

"People cannot psychologically cope with the situation they are in, and they are not provided with psychological help," said attorney Tetyana Ivanova. *—PTI*

Most of the soldiers take medical leave and never return, haunted by the traumas of war and demoralised by bleak prospects for victory ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Struggle to rebuild a war-torn Lebanon is on amid truce talks

Hours after a US-brokered ceasefire to end the war between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect, Lebanon woke up to the sound of celebratory gunfire instead of Israeli airstrikes and drones buzzing overhead.

It was a rare moment of respite for Lebanon, as bombs stopped falling after a year of war. Thousands of displaced people joyfully drove back to their towns and villages in southern and eastern Lebanon.

But the realisation of what lies ahead quickly sank in. Town after town in the south and east as well as parts of Beirut have been destroyed, entire border villages levelled to the ground, and thousands of buildings damaged. The World Bank estimates losses amounting to some USD 8.5 billion.

For the tiny and broken Mediterranean country, which has dealt with compounded calamities for over half a decade, the ceasefire deal has brought more questions than answers.

Among them, who will foot the bill for rebuilding? Will Hezbollah fully remove its fighters and arsenals from the south, relocating north of the Litani River — and how will the Lebanese army ensure that it does so? And will Israel ultimately accept the militants being pushed back, battered but not destroyed?

Meanwhile, Lebanon's political paralysis between groups allied and opposed to Hezbollah has only worsened during the war — raising the possibility of instability that could rattle the ceasefire. Anger has grown among some over that they see as the Iran-backed group's decision to provoke another disastrous war with Israel.

During the 60-day first phase of the ceasefire deal, based on Security Council Resolution 1701, Hezbollah and Israeli forces are to withdraw from south Lebanon, and the Lebanese military is to step in.

The Lebanese troops are to ensure that Hezbollah dismantles its facilities and military positions and that it doesn't try to rebuild. That's a major point of tension, potentially putting the army in a dangerous confrontation with the more powerful militant group.

The army, largely funded by the United States and other Western governments, is a rare point of unity in Lebanon's tense sectarian power-balancing political system. But it's always tried to avoid friction with Hezbollah, which is backed by a large constituency among Lebanon's Shiite Muslims.

Hassan Fadlallah, a Hezbollah lawmaker, told reporters that the group will cooperate with the army to implement the ceasefire. But he also said the military doesn't have the capability to defend Lebanon against Israel — a role Hezbollah has long claimed. He said the group would continue in that role.

"Can anyone say if Israel attacks, we watch?" Fadlallah said. "When Israel attacks our country, we will fight and resist. This is our right."

Mike Azar, a Lebanese commentator, said the army is "in an impossible position."

"To suggest that it can disarm or dismantle Hezbollah's infrastructure is, frankly, absurd," he said in an online post.

The Lebanese military has suffered as well, with troops working second jobs to pay the bills ***PHOTO: X***

The US and France will also be involved in a monitoring mechanism to make sure Resolution 1701 is implemented. Critics of the deal fear the pressure is far greater on Lebanon, and Israel has more space to attack Hezbollah — which it has vowed to do if it believes Hezbollah isn't abiding by its terms.

With US support, Israel has given itself "almost total freedom to determine when it needs or wants to attack Lebanon again for whatever reason," said Matt Duss, executive vice president of The Center for International Policy, a Washington-based think tank.

Lebanon since late 2019 has been mired in a crippling financial crisis that pushed millions into poverty, destroyed its banking system, and limited the country to just a few hours of state electricity daily.

The Lebanese military has suffered as well, with troops quitting or working second jobs to pay the bills. Yet, the aim of the agreement is for Lebanon to recruit more and deploy an additional 10,000 troops south of the Litani River. Without significant funding, this would be impossible — especially with the huge rebuilding costs Lebanon now faces.

The international community in a donor conference in Paris last month pledged USD 1 billion dollars for Lebanon, including USD 800 million for humanitarian assistance and USD 200 million to support the army. But aid groups say none of that funding has materialised yet.

A looming question is who will foot the bill. Iran has offered to help, but it's cash-strapped and under Western sanctions. Oil-rich Gulf Arab states, who helped rebuild after the 2006 war, are weary of Lebanon's political class and not inclined to step in.

Even before the war, Hezbollah and its arsenal were a point of contention in Lebanon. Its allies say Hezbollah's militants are crucial in protecting Lebanon, while critics say its weaponry violates state sovereignty and is used to pressure political opponents. They have long demanded Hezbollah be disarmed.

Senior parliamentarian Alain Aoun said Lebanon has a long list of urgent matters to address, including electing a president after over two years of vacuum, securing reconstruction funding and resolving a host of neglected economic issues. Hezbollah's opponents were also angered over its decision to unilaterally start firing rockets into northern Israel on October 8, 2023. The group said it was acting in solidarity with its ally Hamas in the Gaza Strip and vowed not to stop until a ceasefire there was reached.

SSCritics say it dragged Lebanon into war and brought Israel's destructive bombardment. *—PTI*

Iran to begin enriching uranium: UN watchdog

TEHRAN, 29 NOV

Iran will begin enriching uranium with thousands of advanced centrifuges at its two main nuclear facilities at Fordo and Natanz, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog said Friday, further raising tensions over Tehran's programme as it enriches at near weapons-grade levels. The notice from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) only mentioned Iran enriching uranium with new centrifuges to 5 per cent purity, far lower than the 60 per cent it currently does — likely signaling that it still wants to negotiate with the West and the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump. Iran's mission to the UN did not comment.—*PTI*

Jailed Kremlin critic gets new prison term

TALLINN, 29 NOV

Imprisoned Kremlin critic Alexei Gorinov was convicted again on Friday for opposing Russia's war in Ukraine and handed a three-year prison term. A swift, three-day trial against Gorinov, once a low-profile activist, underscored Moscow's intolerance of any dissenting voices. Gorinov, a 63-year-old former member of a Moscow municipal council, is already serving a seven-year prison term for public criticism of the full-scale invasion. Taking into account his previous conviction and sentence, a court in Russia's Vladimir region ordered him to serve a total of five years in a maximum-security prison, a facility with stricter conditions than the one he's currently in. Russia's independent news site Mediazona quoted Gorinov's lawyer as saying that it means he will spend a year more behind bars compared to his previous sentence.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

China jails scribe for seven years on espionage charges

BEIJING, 29 NOV

A court in China has sentenced journalist Dong Yuyu to seven years in prison on spying charges, according to a statement from his family, who called it a "grave injustice". In its verdict on Friday, the Beijing No 2 Intermediate People's Court deemed the 62-year-old former editor of the Communist Party's Guangming Daily guilty based on prior meetings with senior Japanese diplomats, his family said. Police guarded the court with seven police cars parked nearby, asking journalists to leave The sentence based on "no evidence declares to the world the bankruptcy of the justice system in China", the family statement read. Press freedom advocates have called for Dong's release.

—*Al Jazeera*

Israeli strikes kill 30 in Central Gaza

Meanwhile, Israel released 30 Palestinians

CAIRO, 29 NOV

Israeli military strikes killed at least 30 Palestinians overnight in the Gaza Strip, most of them in the Nuseirat camp at the center of the enclave, medics said on Friday after some tanks pulled back from an area they had raided.

Medics said they had recovered 19 bodies of Palestinians killed in the northern areas of Nuseirat, one of the enclave's eight long-standing refugee camps.

Some tanks remained active in the western area of the camp and the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said teams were unable to respond to distress calls from residents trapped inside their houses.

The rest were killed in the northern and southern areas of the Gaza Strip, medics added. There was no fresh statement by the Israeli military on Friday, but on Thursday it said its forces were continuing to "strike terror targets as part of the operational activity in the Gaza Strip". Meanwhile, the Israeli authorities released around 30 Palestinians whom it had detained during the ongoing offensive in Gaza in the past months. The released people arrived at a hospital in southern Gaza for medical check-ups, medics said.

Amid the war, Palestinians kids hold metal pots to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis **PHOTO: EPA**

Freed Palestinians, detained during the war, have complained of ill-treatment and torture in Israeli detention after they were released. Israel denies torture. Months of efforts to negotiate a ceasefire in Gaza have yielded scant progress, and negotiations are now on hold. A ceasefire in the parallel conflict between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah, an ally of Hamas, took effect before dawn on Wednesday, bringing a halt to hostilities that had escalated sharply in recent months and had overshadowed the Gaza conflict. —*Arab News*

100 MISSING AFTER BOAT CAPSIZES IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

ABUJA, 29 NOV

At least 100 passengers, most of them women, were missing after a boat transporting them to a food market capsized along the River Niger in northern Nigeria, authorities said Friday.

The boat was taking the passengers from Kogi state along the river to neighboring Niger early Friday morning when it capsized, Niger State Emergency Management Agency spokesman Ibrahim Audu told The Associated Press. At least eight people were confirmed dead at the scene while local divers were trying to rescue others. Authorities have not confirmed what caused the sinking. However, local media reported that the boat was carrying more than 200 passengers, suggesting it might have been overloaded. Overcrowding in vehicles is common in remote parts of Nigeria where the lack of good roads leaves many with no alternative routes. —*PTI*

FOLLOWING LAWYER'S DEATH

B'desh freezes 17 accounts of ISKCON

DHAKA, 29 NOV

Bangladesh's authorities have ordered the freezing of bank accounts of 17 people for 30 days associated with ISKCON, including its former member Chinmoy Krishna Das arrested this week on sedition charges, media reports said Friday.

The move comes after the Bangladesh High Court rejected a petition seeking a ban on International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), following the killing of a lawyer in a clash between the Hindu leader's supporters and security personnel.

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) sent these directives to different banks and financial institutions on Thursday, suspending all types of transactions related to these accounts for a month, newspaper Prothom Alo said.

Krishna Das **PHOTO: X**

The financial intelligence agency under the central Bangladesh Bank asked the banks and financial institutions to send information, including updated transaction statements of accounts related to all businesses owned by these 17 individuals, within the next three working days, it said. On 26 November, New Delhi expressed concern over the leader's arrest and denial of bail and asked Bangladesh to ensure the safety of Hindus and other minorities.

A spokesman of the attorney general's office said a two-member High Court bench that declined to ban the ISKCON activities in Bangladesh also said the situation did not warrant the intervention of the (High) court "at this time" as the State is carrying out its job.

The Bench hoped that the government would remain cautious about protecting the law-and-order situation and the lives and properties of people.

—*PTI*

CLIMATE FURY

Residents walk on a flooded street after heavy monsoon rains in downtown Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

3 dead, 80,000 displaced in Malaysian floods

KUALA LUMPUR, 29 NOV

Malaysia is preparing for potentially its worst flooding in a decade as devastating monsoon rains have already claimed three lives and displaced over 80,000 residents. The National Disaster Command Centre reports that 84,597 individuals from more than 25,000 families across seven states have been evacuated to 488 temporary shelters. Kelantan, in the northeast, has been hardest hit, with approximately 56,029 evacuees, followed by Terengganu with 21,264.

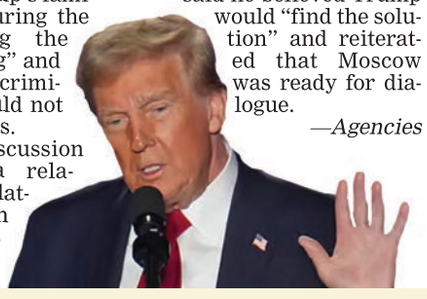
Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi indicated that this year's floods could surpass the catastrophic events of 2014, which displaced over 250,000 people and resulted in 21 fatalities. With forecasts predicting further heavy rainfall next month, the government has mobilised nearly 83,000 personnel alongside thousands of rescue boats, four-wheel drive vehicles, and life jackets. Additionally, , and 8,481 evacuation centres have been prepared to accommodate over two million. —*PTI*

Putin says Trump's safety is at risk

ASTANA, 29 NOV

Russian President Vladimir Putin praised U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on 28 November 2024, describing him as an experienced and intelligent politician. However, Putin voiced concerns over Trump's safety after multiple assassination attempts. Trump was wounded in a July attack in Pennsylvania, and in a separate incident in September, a man was charged with attempted assassination after allegedly positioning himself with a rifle at one of Trump's Florida golf courses.

Speaking to reporters in Kazakhstan after a summit, Putin expressed shock over the U.S. election campaign, criticizing the "uncivilized" methods used to oppose Trump, including the assassination attempts. "By the way, in my opinion, he is not safe now," Putin remarked. He added that he hoped Trump, being intelligent, would be cautious and aware of the dangers. Putin also condemned the attacks on Trump's family and children during the campaign, calling the behavior "revolting" and saying that even criminals in Russia would not stoop to such tactics.



In a broader discussion about U.S.-Russia relations, Putin speculated that the Biden administration's decision to escalate the war in Ukraine with Western missiles might either be an attempt to assist Trump or complicate his future dealings with Russia. Despite the tensions, Putin said he believed Trump would "find the solution" and reiterated that Moscow was ready for dialogue.

—*Agencies*

Putin's 'secret' daughter living in Paris

According to sources, 21-year-old Elizaveta Krivonogikh, believed to be Putin's secret daughter, has been living under the alias Luiza Rozova in Paris since the Ukraine war began. As per the investigation by a Ukrainian TV, she is posing as a relative of Putin ally Oleg Rudnov and disappeared from social media after the war's start. She is residing in Monaco with her mother. —*Agencies*

Putin apologises to Angela Merkel

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday apologised to former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, regarding an incident where his Labrador was present during their 2007 meeting. In her memoir 'Freedom', Merkel revealed her fear of dogs. Putin apologized, stating he was unaware of her fear and promised not to bring the dog to future meetings. —*Agencies*

9 killed in Indonesia's Sumatra island landslides

SIBOLANGIT, 29 NOV

The rescuers have recovered two additional bodies from a tourist bus affected by a landslide triggered by torrential rains on Sumatra island, raising the death toll to nine, authorities reported. The devastating incident is part of a series of landslides and floods this week that have resulted in at least 20 fatalities across the region.The bus, which was buried under mud, rocks, and fallen trees, was travelling on the main route from Medan to Berastagi in North Sumatra province when it was caught in the disaster. Many vehicles have been stranded due to previous landslides along the road since Wednesday morning.Injured passengers have been transported to a hospital in Medan. —*PTI*

Ukrainian energy workers carry out repairs after Russian strikes

KYIV, 29 NOV

On a bright winter day, workers at a Ukrainian thermal power plant repair its heavily damaged equipment as drops of water from melted snow leak through gaping holes in its battered roof.

Several weeks earlier, the facility was targeted by a Russian air attack that left scorch marks, shrapnel scars on the walls, and missile fragments scattered across the production floor.

"This is our life now. Workers at a thermal power plant that's supposed to produce electricity are walking on frozen floors and using firewood to keep warm," Oleksandr, 52, head of the Production Management Department, told The Associated Press. He spoke on condition that only his first name be used citing security concerns.Repeated Russian strikes on infrastructure have seriously impacted Ukraine's energy sector often resulting in rolling blackouts across the country. —*PTI*

Russian defence minister visits N Korea amid military tensions

SEOUL, 29 NOV

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov arrived in North Korea on Friday for discussions with key military and political figures, as reported by the Russian Defence Ministry. This visit follows a meeting between South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and a Ukrainian delegation led by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov. Yoon called for strategic countermeasures from both countries in response to North Korea's reported deployment of over 10,000 troops.

Malaysian billionaire Ananda Krishnan dies at 86

KUALA LUMPUR, 29 NOV

Ananda Krishnan, one of Malaysia's most affluent businessmen, has passed away at the age of 86. His investment company, Usaha Tegas, announced his death on Thursday, stating he died peacefully and requesting privacy for his family. The cause of death has not been disclosed.

Ranked as Malaysia's sixth-richest individual by Forbes, Krishnan had a net worth of USD 5.1 billion. Krishnan was instrumental in the development of Malaysia's national identity, serving as a founding director of state oil firm Petronas and proposing the iconic Petronas Twin Towers. —*PTI*

Australia visa fee hike puts Indian students in a pickle

CANBERRA, 29 NOV

The Australian government has raised its international student visa fee by 126 per cent, from AUD 710 to AUD 1,600, effective from 1 July 2024.

This increase, confirmed by India's Minister of State for External Affairs, Kirti Vardhan Singh, has caused financial concern for Indian students, who make up a significant portion of Australia's international student community. The hike comes amid global inflation and rising living costs, further straining students' budgets. Indian enrollment numbers have fluctuated in recent years, dropping from 126,487 in 2023 to 118,109 in 2024. Higher visa rejection rates have added to the challenges. —*Agencies*

AHEAD OF 80TH ANNIVERSARY

In a first, Macron acknowledges 1944 massacre

DAKAR (SENEGAL) 29 NOV

French President Emmanuel Macron has, for the first time, recognised the 1 December, 1944, killings of West African soldiers by the French Army as a massacre in a letter addressed to the Senegalese authorities. This acknowledgment comes ahead of the 80th anniversary of the tragic event, which took place in Thiaroye, a fishing village near Dakar.

On that day, between 35 and 400 members of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais, who had fought for France in World War II, were shot by French soldiers following a dispute over unpaid wages. Historians report that, after tensions rose over the soldiers' grievances, French troops opened fire on the largely unarmed soldiers.

Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye confirmed receipt of Macron's letter, stating it should "open the door" to uncovering the full truth behind the Thiaroye massacre. Faye expressed hope for a "full, frank and collaborative" commitment from France to this historical matter. Macron's letter emphasised the importance of understanding the events leading to the tragedy, asking for updates on the investigation by a committee established to review the facts, led by Professor Mamadou Diouf.

Emmanuel Macron **PHOTO: PTI**

The letter arrives on the heels of Senegal's recent legislative elections, in which Faye's ruling party PASTEF secured a significant majority. This victory facilitates the President's plans for reforms aimed at achieving greater economic independence from foreign influences, particularly French corporations.

Faye also addressed the presence of approximately 350 French troops in Senegal, hinting that the continued military presence may not align with the sentiments of the Senegalese people. "When you reverse the roles," he remarked, "it's hard to conceive that another country could maintain a military base in France." —*PTI*

Chad ends defence pact with France

DAKAR, 29 NOV

Chad has declared the termination of its defence cooperation agreement with France, aiming to redefine its sovereignty from the former colonial power. This lmarks a significant shift since the Central African republic gained independence over six decades ago. There has yet to be official response from France.

UK MPs vote in favour of bill to allow assisted dying

LONDON, 29 NOV

British lawmakers gave initial approval on Friday to a bill to help terminally ill adults end their lives in England and Wales.

After an impassioned and debate, members of Parliament approved the so-called assisted dying bill by a vote of 330 to 275.

The vote signals lawmakers' approval in principle for the bill and sends it on to further scrutiny in Parliament. Similar legislation failed to pass that important first test in 2015.

The vote came after hours of debate — emotional at times — that touched on issues of ethics, grief, the law, faith, crime and money. Hundreds of people on both sides of the issue gathered outside Parliament.

Speeches from supporters included heart-wrenching stories about constituents and family members who suffered in the final months of their lives and dying people who committed suicide in secret because it is currently a crime for anyone to provide assistance. Those opposed spoke of the danger that vulnerable, elderly and disabled people could be coerced into opting for assisted dying to save money or relieve the burden on family members. Others called for the improvement of palliative care to ease suffering as an alternative.

It's the first time the House of Commons has had the opportunity to vote on legalising what some people call "assisted dying" but which others term as "assisted suicide" in nearly a decade — and it looks like it will be a close result. Other countries that have legalized assisted suicide include Australia, Belgium, Canada and parts of US. —*PTI*

Rupee crashes 13P to settle at record low of 84.60

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

The rupee plunged 13 paise to settle at a fresh all-time low of 84.60 against US dollar on Friday, dragged down by unabated foreign fund outflows even as weak domestic macroeconomic data jolted the overall sentiment. Forex traders said, dollar demand from importers for meeting month-end payment obligations weighed on the rupee, while, the GDP data released by the government later in the day adversely impacted the currency market, toppling the local unit to its record low. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.49, inched up to 84.48 and touched the lowest level of 84.60 against the greenback during intra-day. The unit also ended the session at 84.60 against the dollar, registering a sharp fall of 13 paise over its previous close. Rupee's previous lowest closing level of 84.50 was recorded on 21 November. *—PTI*

Gold prices jump by ₹700; silver climbs ₹1,300

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Gold prices rose by Rs 700 to Rs 79,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday due to fresh buying by local jewellers and a firm overseas trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed at Rs 78,700 per 10 grams on Thursday. Silver also climbed Rs 1,300 to Rs 92,200 per kg. On Thursday, the white metal prices crashed by Rs 4,900 to Rs 90,900 per kg. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity advanced Rs 700 to hit Rs 79,000-mark against the previous close of Rs 78,300 per 10 grams on Thursday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery climbed Rs 602 or 0.79 per cent to trade at Rs 76,326 per 10 grams. *—PTI*

Vijay Chandok joins as MD & CEO of NSDL

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) on Friday said Vijay Chandok, a financial market veteran, has joined as its managing director and chief executive officer. Prior to joining NSDL, Chandok served as the MD and CEO of ICICI Securities. He held pivotal roles at the ICICI Group, including on the board of ICICI Bank as an executive director. A seasoned banker and a financial market veteran with over three decades of experience, Chandok brings a wealth of expertise in the BFSI sector, NSDL said in a statement. NSDL is a Sebi-registered market infrastructure institution offering a wide range of products and services to the financial and securities markets in India. NSDL pioneered the dematerialisation of securities in India in November 1996. *—PTI*

Nirmala chairs review meeting of RRBs in Patna

PATNA, 29 NOV

Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired a review meeting of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) from the Eastern Belt in Patna on Friday. The meeting focused on strengthening the role of RRBs in fostering rural development and was attended by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, Department of Financial Services (DFS) Secretary M Nagaraju, Chairmen of RRBs, and senior DFS officials. Sharing the development on social media platform X, the Ministry of Finance posted on X, "Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs @nsitharaman chairs the review meeting of the Regional Rural Banks #RRBs of the Eastern Belt, in Patna, today." This review is part of a broader series of nationwide meetings undertaken by the Finance Minister to assess and enhance the performance of RRBs *—ANI*

CRISIL: No negative action by investors yet on Adani

CRISIL notes impact of AGEL's market drop, bond cancellation

The Adani Group reported a healthy Ebitda of Rs 82,917 crore for fiscal 2024 with a net debt ratio of 2:19 times *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Backing embattled Adani Group, rating agency CRISIL Ratings on Friday said the conglomerate has sufficient liquidity and operational cash flows to meet debt obligations and committed capex and that there has been no negative actions so far by lenders and investors following the US indictment of group founder chairman.

The Adani Group, which has the flexibility to reduce certain discretionary capital expenditure (capex) depending on developments in financial markets and future capital availability, has a healthy Ebitda and cash balance that reduces its dependence on external debt to sustain operations, it said in a bulletin.

On 20 November, 2024, the United States Department of Justice and the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) issued an indictment and a civil complaint, respectively, in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, against Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani and Vneet Jaain, key functionaries of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL).

The charges relate to allegations of securities fraud, wire fraud and violation of the SEC guidelines that led to materially false and misleading statements in the bond offering documents of AGEL with respect to anti-bribery and anti-corruption policies.

"CRISIL Ratings has taken note of these developments and their likely impact on the financial flexibility of the group, including the fall in the market capitalisation of the listed companies of the group, movement in bond yields, and calling off the USD 600 million bond offering of AGEL," the rating agency said.

"The Adani Group reported a healthy Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) of Rs 82,917 crore for fiscal 2024 with a net debt-to-Ebitda ratio of 2.19 times.

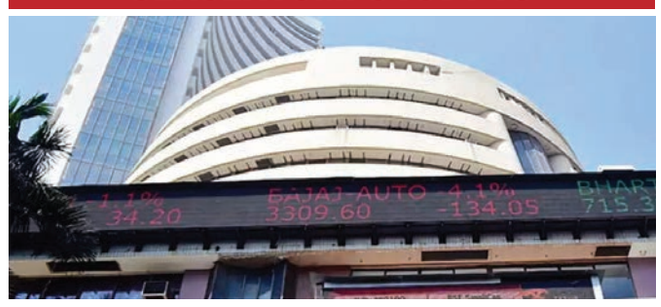
"Cash balance was over Rs 53,000 crore across 8 listed operating entities as of September 2024 against long-term debt maturities of Rs 27,500 crore; and go-to market/construction facility of Rs 8,919 crore during October-March fiscal 2025." *—PTI/ANI*

ADANI SHARES SOAR HIGH

Shares of 9 listed Adani Group firms were up on Friday, with Adani Green Energy surging nearly 22 per cent

- **ADANI GREEN ENERGY** 21.77% (₹1,323.90)
- **ADANI ENERGY SOLUTIONS:** 15.64% (₹840.50)
- **ADANI TOTAL GAS** 1.03% (₹812.35)
- **ADANI POWER** 4.90% (₹554.80)
- **AMBUJA CEMENTS** 3.73% (₹6,064)
- **SANGHI INDUSTRIES** 2.44% (₹81.16)
- **ADANI PORTS** 1.94% (₹1,190)
- **ADANI WILMAR** 0.05% (₹313.65)
- **ADANI ENTERPRISES** 1.02% (₹2,463.15)
- **ACC** (Ambuja subsidary) 1.59% (₹2,222.55)

SENSEX JUMPS 759 PTS



Nifty climbed 216.95 points or 0.91 per cent to 24,131.10 *PHOTO: PTI*

Mkt rebounds after deep plunge to settle 1% higher

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Friday, surging nearly 1 per cent each, amid buying in frontline stocks Bharti Airtel and Reliance Industries.

The BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 759.05 points or 0.96 per cent to settle at 79,802.79. During the day, it soared 880.16 points or 1.11 per cent to 79,923.90.

The NSE Nifty climbed 216.95 points or 0.91 per cent to 24,131.10.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro, JSW Steel, Hindustan Unilever, Titan and Tata Motors were the biggest gainers.

Power Grid, Nestle, State Bank of India and Infosys were the laggards.

Majority of Adani Group firms ended higher, with Adani Green Energy soaring 21.72 per cent and Adani Energy Solutions surging 15.56 per cent on the BSE.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.76 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.31 per cent.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower.

European markets were trading lower. US markets were closed on Thursday for Thanksgiving. *—PTI*

MOTILAL, ICICI BIG INVESTORS

Zomato raises $1B via QIP

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Food delivery aggregator Zomato has raised Rs 8,500 crore by selling equity shares to qualified institutional investors, mainly domestic mutual fund houses, to fund its expansion and growth plans.

Zomato, which also owns quick-commerce firm Blinkit, had launched its Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) issue on 25 November, which closed on Thursday.

In a regulatory filing on Friday, Zomato informed that it has raised Rs 8,500 crore through a Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) issue.

This is the first major fundraise since the company got listed on the stock exchanges in July 2021.

The Fund Raising Committee of Zomato's board approved the allotment of 33,64,73,755 (33.65 crore) shares to eligible qualified institutional buyers at an issue price of Rs 252.62 apiece, aggregating to Rs 8,500 crore.

These shares were allotted to investors at 5 per cent discount from the floor price, which was fixed at Rs 265.91 per share.

PHOTO: PTI

Four domestic mutual fund houses -- ICICI Prudential, Motilal Oswal, HDFC and Kotak -- were allotted over 5 per cent of the equity shares offered in the QIP issue.

Motilal Oswal emerged as the biggest participant picking up 21 per cent share of the allocation by investing around Rs 1,750 crore.

Recently, Zomato CEO Deepinder Goyal had said that the proposed fundraise is meant to strengthen its balance sheet.

The funds raised through the QIP issue will be used for growth and expansion plans of Zomato as well as its quick commerce business Blinkit. *—PTI*

Swiggy shares drop by 4.23%

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Swiggy's share price declined by 4.23 per cent on Friday, sparking discussions among investors about whether to buy, hold, or sell.
The dip reflects broader market volatility and sector-specific challenges, including intensifying competition and rising operational costs.
Analysts suggest this could be a buying opportunity for long-term investors, while others advise caution until market conditions stabilize.
Swiggy's robust growth potential remains a key attraction, but short-term risks persist. Investors are advised to monitor upcoming quarterly results for clearer insights.
—Agencies

The report also expressed a preference for large-cap schemes over mid- and small-cap schemes *PHOTO: X*

FPI's influence on markets reduced over time: ICICI

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) continue to influence Indian stock markets however the extent of their impact on major indices has reduced over time, says a report by ICICI Mutual Fund.

The report attributed this decline in sensitivity to the strengthening of India's economy, which has made the markets more resilient to transient FPI flows.

It said, "Though Indian markets continue to remain sensitive to FPI flows, the extent to which it is impacted has gone down".

The report also highlighted that FPIs, traditionally a significant source of short-term capital in emerging economies like India, have recently been selling off their holdings in Indian markets. This sell-off has brought large-cap stock valuations to more reasonable levels compared to mid- and small-cap stocks.

The report also expressed a preference for large-cap schemes over mid- and small-cap schemes, stating that large caps are likely to benefit the most if FPIs return to the markets.

Slowdown in the corporate earnings in India further dampened investor sentiment, as high valuations coupled with below-par earnings have raised concerns about a potential slowdown in growth.

While the equity markets may witness intermittent volatility, the structural strengths are expected to sustain long-term growth. *—ANI*

Builders, lenders optimistic as realty sentiment soars

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Real estate developers and financial institutions are upbeat about growth potential of the realty sector for the six months ending March next year, according to Knight Frank and NAREDCO.

Real estate consultant Knight Frank and realtors' body NAREDCO on Friday released 'Real Estate Sentiment Index Q3 2024 (July-September 2024)', highlighting continued optimism in the realty sector.

There was a marginal dip in the current sentiment score, which stands at 64, down from 65 in the April-June period.

However, the future sentiment score improved to 67, up from 65 in the previous quarter, signalling rising confidence in the sector's growth over the next six months.

The index captures the perceptions of supply-side stakeholders and financial institutions regarding the real estate sector, economic climate, and funding availability. A score of 50 indicates a neutral outlook; scores above 50 reflect positive sentiment, while those below 50 suggest a negative outlook. *—PTI*

FISCAL DEFICIT HITS 46.5% OF ANNUAL TARGET BY OCT

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of the first seven months of financial year 2024-25 touched 46.5 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed on Friday.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between government's expenditure and revenue - was at Rs 7,50,824 crore during April-October period, according to data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

The deficit stood at 45 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) in the corresponding period of 2023-24.

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2024-25 financial year. The deficit was 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023-24.

- In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2024-25 financial year

The revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for the first seven months of 2024-25 showed that the net tax revenue was about Rs 13 lakh crore or 50.5 per cent of budget estimate for the current fiscal.

The net tax revenue collection was 55.9 per cent at September-end of 2023.

The central government's total expenditure in the seven months through October stood at Rs 24.7 lakh crore or 51.3 per cent of budget estimate. Expenditure was 53.2 per cent of budget estimate. *—PTI*

'No govt role in scrap vehicle pricing'

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari said that there will be no government intervention for determining the fair price for a vehicle to be scrapped. The market forces will determine the fair price of the vehicle to be scrapped.

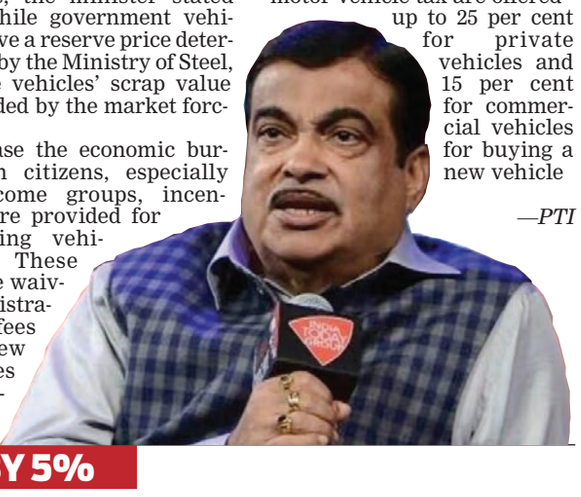
"There is no intervention by the Government in determination of fair price of private vehicles to be scrapped. The price of these vehicles is decided by the market forces as per the condition of the vehicle to be scrapped" said Gadkari

The minister also noted that the Reserve Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF) units, set up as private entities, are responsible for determining the price based on vehicle condition.

On compensating vehicle owners, the minister stated that while government vehicles have a reserve price determined by the Ministry of Steel, private vehicles' scrap value is decided by the market forces.

To ease the economic burden on citizens, especially low-income groups, incentives are provided for scrapping vehicles. These include waiving registration fees for new vehicles purchased with a "Certificate of Deposit" issued upon scrapping.

Additionally, concessions in motor vehicle tax are offered-- up to 25 per cent for private vehicles and 15 per cent for commercial vehicles for buying a new vehicle *—PTI*



Volkswagen India unit faces $1.4B tax evasion notice

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Volkswagen India is facing a massive tax evasion notice of around $1.4 billion (approximately 11,000 crore) from the Indian government.

The notice, issued by the Income Tax Department, accuses the automaker of underreporting income and inflating expenses, which resulted in the non-payment of taxes. The company, part of the German automotive giant Volkswagen Group, has expressed its intent to challenge the notice, citing discrepancies in the claims.

This legal battle could have significant financial and reputational implications for Volkswagen's operations in India.

Volkswagen is accused of using a strategy to import components instead of complete kits, which would attract lower duties.

The company intends to challenge the allegations, citing discrepancies. This tax issue has caused a decline in the company's stock price in Germany. *—ANI*

SHARES UP BY 5%

Zee shareholders reject Goenka's reappointment

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The shareholders of Zee Entertainment have rejected a proposal for the reappointment of Punit Goenka as a director of the company, according to a regulatory filing.

The resolution for the re-appointment of Goenka was defeated in the 42nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the company held on Thursday, according to Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL).

The proposal for the reappointment of Goenka as Director, could get support of only 49.54 per cent of the total number of votes cast.

Punit Goenka *PHOTO: X*

- The proposal for the reappointment of Goenka as Director, could get support of only 49.54 per cent of the total number of votes cast

While 50.4 per cent voted against the resolution in the AGM. The Companies Act, 2013, mandates a simple majority of (50 per cent plus one) votes to pass an ordinary resolution at an annual general meeting.

This is a major setback for Goenka who is currently the CEO of the company.

Earlier, several proxy firms had advised the shareholders to vote against Goenka's re-appointment.

However, the three other resolutions for adopting the financial statement for FY'24, declaring a dividend, and ratification of remuneration to cost auditors were passed. Earlier this month, Punit Goenka had resigned from the post of managing director of ZEEL. However, he continued as CEO of the media and entertainment major. He had also withdrawn himself from reappointment for the said post in the AGM.

Shares of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd were trading on Friday morning at Rs 128.55 on BSE, up 4.38 per cent from previous close. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Pranavi Urs T-2 after round one in Malaga

MALAGA, 29 NOV

Pranavi Urs fired a bogey-free round of six-under 66 to be T-2 after the opening round of the Andalucía Costa del Sol Open de Espana here. She was one shot behind the leader, Noora Komulainen of Finland, who got off to a flying start with a round of 65 (-7) at the Real Club Guadalhorce Golf. Pranavi, playing her rookie season on the LET, birdied holes two, three, seven, eight, 12, and 18 for her round of six-under. The three players sharing the second place with Pranavi included the German duo Helen Briem and Patricia Isabel Schmidt, and Spain's Ana Peláez Trivino all fired rounds of 66 (-6). The other Indians, including defending champion Aditi Ashok, had decent rounds. Aditi, who won here last year, was 2-under 70 to be tied 20th, while. Diksha Dagar (71) was T-32 and Tvesa Malik (72) was T-41.—*PTI*

Tennis: Felix, Paolini to headline packed field

ADELAIDE, 29 NOV

Felix Auger-Aliassime and Jasmine Paolini are among the stars who are set to headline the Adelaide International, an ATP 250 event, as tournament Director Alicia Molik is excited about the caliber of players confirmed to compete at The Drive from 6 to 11 January 2025. Felix (former world No.6) and two of the WTA top 10 ranked players Jasmine Paolini, and Emma Navarro, as well as world No.13 Diana Shnaider, will compete in Adelaide early next year. These players will join hometown favorite and 2022 champion Thanasi Kokkinakis, world No.12 Tommy Paul, world No.22 Sebastian Korda, and top-10 stars Jessica Pegula and Barbora Krejcikova – the latter the reigning Wimbledon champion.—*PTI*

Delhi SG Pipers: Navneet to lead women's side

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Delhi SG Pipers on Friday announced the appointment of India's double Olympic medallist midfielder Shamsher Singh and experienced Australian Jacob Whetton as co-captains of their men's team for the first season of the revamped Hockey India League. The Delhi franchise also named India vice-captain and striker Navneet Kaur as the skipper of its women's team. The four-team women's HIL, which begins in Ranchi on 12 January 2025, will make its debut this season. The men's HIL will commence on 28 December in Rourkela.—*PTI*

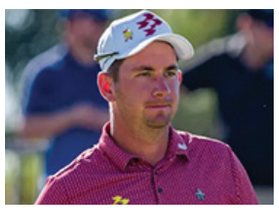


PHOTO: X

Hungry Herbert holds lead at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, 29 NOV

Lucas Herbert again led the way after the second round of the Australian Open while South Korean amateur Hyojin Yang birdied her final hole to take the lead at the Women's Australian Open being played concurrently at two courses on the famed Melbourne sand belt. The tournaments are using alternating tee times and with level prize money for the second consecutive year at the par-72 Kingston Heath (par-73 for the Women's Open) and par-71 Victoria Golf Club. First-round leader Herbert shot 66 Friday at Kingston Heath for a two-round total of 14-under 129.—*PTI*

Champions Trophy: PCB sticks to No Hybrid Model

Int'l Cricket Council emergency meeting to be held today

DUBAI/KARACHI, 29 NOV

Fans stand as national anthems of two countries are played before the start of the match PHOTO: PTI

The emergency meeting of the International Cricket Council's executive board could not achieve a consensus on the much-awaited Champions Trophy schedule and will reconvene on Saturday after Pakistan once again rejected the 'Hybrid' model of hosting the event.

The meeting was brief after Pakistan Cricket Board chief Mohsin Naqvi made it clear that the 'hybrid' model won't be acceptable despite India's firm refusal to travel to his country owing to a lack of government clearance.

"The Board did meet briefly today. All parties continue to work towards a positive resolution for the Champions Trophy 2025 and it is expected that the Board will reconvene on Saturday and continue to meet over the next few days," a senior administrator of an ICC full member nation, who is also a part of the Board, told PTI. In Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reiterated BCCI's stand that the Indian team cannot travel to Pakistan due to security reasons.

"BCCI has issued a statement. They have said that there are security concerns there and it is therefore unlikely that the team will be going there," an MEA spokesperson said in a routine briefing when the country's Champions Trophy participation was mentioned.

PCB chairman Naqvi attended the meeting in person as he has been in Dubai since Thursday to push Pakistan's stance. BCCI secretary Jay Shah attended the meeting online. Shah will take charge as the new ICC head on 1 December.

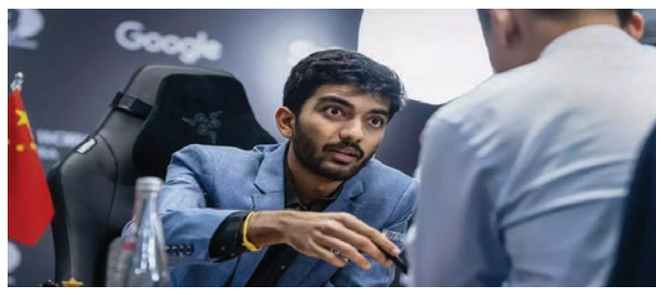
It is understood that the 'Hybrid Model' is being seen as the only "plausible solution" and if the tournament is adjourned, the PCB will have to forego their hosting fee of USD six million along with gate revenue.

There could also be a significant cut in their annual revenue, which is to the tune of USD 35 million.

Unless the 'Hybrid Model' is implemented, even the ICC will be in a spot of bother as official broadcaster Star would then renegotiate the multi-billion dollar deal with the body.

The only window available for the tournament is between February 19 to March 9 and all other participating nations have their bilateral engagements after that. —*PTI*

BATTLE OF EQUALS



India's D Gukesh plays against Ding Liren of China at the FIDE World Championship 2024 PHOTO: PTI

Gukesh and Liren draw 4th round game

SINGAPORE, 29 NOV

Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh and defending champion Ding Liren played out a mostly risk-free draw in the fourth round to remain level on points in the World Chess Championship battle here on Friday.

The two players signed peace after 42 moves via repetition and are tied on two points each after four games of the 14-round showdown. The first to reach 7.5 points will be crowned the champion.The 18-year-old Gukesh, who was playing with black on Friday, is the youngest-ever challenger for the title and won the third game on Wednesday."Towards the end, I had some chances to press better but with black, this is all you can expect," Gukesh said after the game."I am just trying to make good moves," he added when asked about the prospect of becoming the youngest world champion.

The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game before the two played out a draw in the second game."This round, I tried to play safe. It turns out I got a little bit of an advantage. The score is still balanced. There are more games to come," Liren said."I had a rest day to recover from the tough loss. I am in a very good mood. It worked well, not so bad," he added.With just 10 games remaining under the classical time control, Gukesh will have the advantage of playing white in the fifth game. On Friday, Liren started with the bird's opening trying to take out on the queen's bishop early in the opening which was a clear indication that the Chinese wanted to fight the Indians on skill rather than preparation. —*PTI*

Action and skill set make Bumrah a complete package: Steve Smith

MELBOURNE, 29 NOV

Steve Smith and Jasprit Bumrah PHOTO: PTI

Star India pacer Jasprit Bumrah's unorthodox bowling action and exceptional skill set makes him a "complete package," according to Australia's premier batter Steve Smith.

Leading India in the absence of regular skipper Rohit Sharma, Bumrah was adjudged 'Player of the Match' after claiming eight wickets, including a five-wicket haul in the first innings, to power the visitors to a 295-run victory in the opening Test.

"From the start of his run-up, it's just all awkward," Smith told the Sydney Morning Herald.

"The way he runs is different to pretty much anyone else, then the last bit of his action is different. I've faced him a reasonable amount now, and each time you face him it takes a few balls just to get the rhythm of it in a way."

Smith was among Bumrah's victims during a devastating opening spell in the first innings, where the pacer tore through the Australian top-order. Former Pakistan skipper Wasim Akram explained how Bumrah's release point is at least a foot closer to the batters than any other bowler making it that much difficult to pick the length.

"He releases the ball closer to you than any other bowler, just the way he does it. So maybe it rushes you a bit more than you think, and it's just an awkward action," said the 35-year-old Smith, who was trapped by Bumrah for a duck. —*PTI*

Gill returns to nets after recovering from thumb injury PHOTO: PTI

India look to make most of pink-ball warm-up

CANBERRA, 29 NOV

India would aim to figure out their batting combination for next week's day-night Test in Adelaide when they face Australia Prime Minister's XI in a two-day tour game at the Manuka Oval here from Saturday.India have played four day-night Tests thus far with their only loss coming at Adelaide four years ago when they were bowled out for 36 before making a winning comeback in the four-match Test series.The pink ball does a lot more compared to the red cherry, especially in the twilight period. Considering it is not a first-class game, the majority of the Indian batters would like to get a feel of the ball in the middle. Coming from their most dominant win in Australia in the opening Test in Perth, the Indian dressing room is in high spirits.

However, the arrival of Rohit Sharma, who missed the first Test due to the birth of his second child, and the expected return of a fit-again Shubman Gill will force the think tank to rejig the batting order for the match beginning 6 December. Rohit and Yashasvi Jaiswal are the designated openers but with the latter and K L Rahul excelling at the top in Perth, there is a case for the Indian skipper to drop himself down the order.If that does happen, Gill's position will also need to be adjusted. India will have to make those calls in the practice game before reaching Adelaide with full clarity.

As it is only a two-day game, India would be hoping to get a lot more time with the bat than the ball. The likes of Sarfaraz Khan, who are unlikely to be considered unless there is an injury, would also be hoping for some game time.

The team is in a relaxed mood and had its first net session on Friday where Gill took guard, indicating that his recovery is well on course. India has been reluctant to play tour games as they are often not competitive enough.Match starts: 9.10 am IST. —*PTI*

Harry rides his luck for century

New Zealand all-rounder Glenn Phillips produces stunning catch to dismiss England's Ollie Pope on Day Two of the first Test PHOTO: X

CHRISTCHURCH, 29 NOV

You have to make hay while the sun shines, as Harry Brook proved in two distinct interpretations of that hackneyed adage. His seventh Test century and sixth away from home was a magnificent and crucial contribution to a day of wildly contrasting weather patterns, as England recovered from a torrid working over under overcast morning skies to storm towards first-innings parity by the close, as the sun broke back through for the day's final two sessions.

But rarely can New Zealand have clouded their fortunes with a spate of fielding lapses to match those that they served up on this enthralling second day.

Six clear-cut chances went begging in the course of England's 319 for 5, including four for Brook alone - and at almost rhythmical interviews too: on 18, 41, 70, and 106, as if designed to douse their bowlers' morale any time they looked ready to turn back the tide.

The upshot is a match situation that now feels like England's to blow. The sense after they'd prised out eight first-day wickets after choosing to bowl first was that this wicket would get better and better for batting, and so it seemed to prove.

Brook himself built key stands of 151 for the fifth wicket with Ollie Pope, who responded to his wicketkeeping reshuffle with an excellent 77, and an unbeaten 97 with his captain, Ben Stokes, who was ominously placed on 37 from 76 at stumps.

Stokes did, however, get a life of his own on 30 in the day's closing overs, as Tom Latham spilled catch No.6, and his third of the day, this time at short cover.

But England had not bargained for the mayhem that greeted them while the clouds were in situ for the first three hours of play.

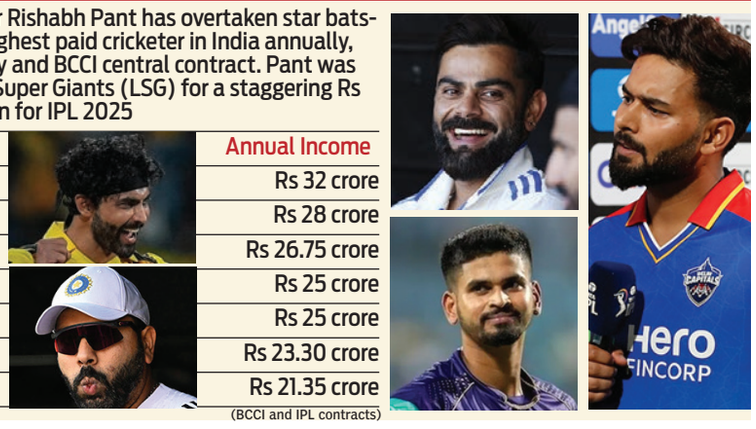
England 319 for 5 (Brook 132*, Pope 77) trail New Zealand 348 (Williamson 93, Phillips 58*, Carse 4-64, Bashir 4-69) by 29 runs. —*PTI*

TOP 7 HIGHEST PAID INDIAN CRICKETERS

Wicket-keeper batter Rishabh Pant has overtaken star batsman Virat Kohli as highest paid cricketer in India annually, considering IPL salary and BCCI central contract. Pant was bought by Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) for a staggering Rs 27 crore in the auction for IPL 2025

Player Rankings	Annual Income
1 Rishabh Pant	Rs 32 crore
2 Virat Kohli	Rs 28 crore
3 Shreyas Iyer	Rs 26.75 crore
4 Jasprit Bumrah	Rs 25 crore
5 Ravindra Jadeja	Rs 25 crore
6 Rohit Sharma	Rs 23.30 crore
7 Hardik Pandya	Rs 21.35 crore

(BCCI and IPL contracts)



F1 FOCUS SHIFTS IN QATAR

McLaren, Red Bull fight for lucrative title

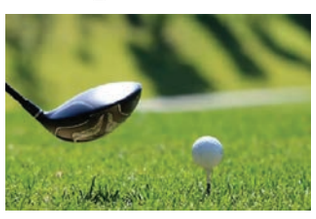
LUSAIL, 29 NOV

Max Verstappen won big in Las Vegas with his fourth title, but the fight for Formula 1's biggest cash prize is hotting up this week in Qatar. The lucrative constructors' championship is still wide open with McLaren, Ferrari, and Red Bull battling for the title. The contest for teams is worth around $140 million to the winner, though the precise pay-out depends on variables. This weekend in Qatar, a sprint race on Saturday means extra points are on offer — a maximum of 59 for a team over the whole weekend.

McLaren leads by 24 points from Ferrari, with Verstappen's Red Bull 29 further back. McLaren could seal its first constructors' crown since 1998 this Sunday, wrapping up the title ahead of the final round in Abu Dhabi next week, but would likely need either a perfect weekend or for Ferrari to encounter problems. McLaren's bid is the new focus for Lando Norris after his challenge for the drivers' title ended last week in Las Vegas. Norris on Thursday dismissed a reported claim from Verstappen that he could have won the crown earlier in a McLaren and suggested the Dutch driver try "comedy". He then suggested his own. "Red Bull probably would have won the constructors' (championship) if they had two drivers as good as Max, that's for sure," Norris said. The contributions of Norris' teammate Oscar Piastri, who won the Qatar sprint race as a rookie last year, have been key to McLaren's hopes. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz Jr. have been close on the track and sometimes too close for comfort all year.Red Bull's Sergio Perez is the only driver in the top three teams without a race win this year, he's eighth in the standings with less than half Verstappen's points total. Qualifying 16th and finishing 10th in Las Vegas was another disappointment.Perez, who has faced speculation over his future almost all year, says he's struggled to make the title-winning Red Bull car fit his driving style. —*PTI*

Connect India Japan to host inaugural Indo-Japan Golf

GURGAON, 29 NOV



The inaugural Indo-Japan Golf Tournament, aimed at strengthening diplomatic and cultural ties between India and Japan, will be held at the ITC Classic Golf Resort here on Saturday.

The one-day tournament, organized by Connect India Japan, will bring together an illustrious lineup of diplomats, business leaders, and cultural ambassadors from both nations.

The event promises to foster collaboration and celebrate shared values through the unifying platform of sports.

Prominent participants include G20 Sherpa and former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, and Harinder S. Sikka, Group Director at Piramal Enterprises and author of Calling Sehmat.

Sikka, who is also the producer of the National Award-winning film Nanak Shah Fakir, will serve as the event's advisor and mentor.

"We are thrilled to bring together such an esteemed group of individuals for this unique tournament," said Nupur Tewari. —*PTI*